REV. JOHN G. HENRY
CINCINNATI, OHIO

John G. Henry

SPURGEON'S SERMONS.

EIGHTH SERIES.

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SERMONS

REV. JOHN G. HENRY,
CINCINNATI, OHIO.

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SERMON I.

BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

"AND HE SAID UNTO THEM, GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD, AND PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE. HE THAT BELIEVETH AND IS BAPTIZED SHALL BE SAVED; BUT HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT SHALL BE DAMNED." — Mark xvi. 15, 16.

In the preceding verse our Lord Jesus Christ gives us some little insight into the natural character of the apostles whom he selected to be the first ministers of the Word. They were evidently men of like passions with us, and needed to be rebuked even as we do. On the occasion when our Lord sent forth the eleven to preach the gospel to every creature, he "appeared unto them as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen;" from which we may surely gather, that, to preach the Word, the Lord was pleased to choose imperfect men; men, too, who of themselves were very weak in the grace of faith in which it was most important that they should excel. Faith is the conquering grace, and is of all things the main requisite in the preacher of the Word; and yet the honored men who were chosen to be the leaders of the divine crusade needed a rebuke concerning their unbelief. Why was this? Why, my brethren, because the Lord has ordained evermore that we should have this treasure in *earthen vessels*, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. If you should find a perfect minister, then might the praise and honor of his usefulness accrue to man; but God is frequently pleased to select for eminent usefulness men evidently honest

and sincere, but who have some manifest infirmity by which all the glory is cast off from them and laid upon himself, and upon himself alone. Let it never be supposed that we who are God's ministers either excuse our faults or pretend to perfection. We labor to walk in holiness, but we cannot claim to be all that we wish to be. We do not base the claims of God's truth upon the spotlessness of our characters, but upon the fact that it comes from him. You have believed in spite of our infirmities, and not because of our virtues. If, indeed, you had believed our word because of our supposed perfection, your faith would stand in the excellency of man and not in the power of God. We come unto you often with much trembling, sorrowing over our follies and weaknesses; but we deliver to you God's Word as God's Word, and we beseech you to receive it, not as coming from us, poor, sinful mortals, but as proceeding from the eternal and thrice-holy God; and if you so receive it, and by its own vital force are moved and stirred up towards God and his ways, then is the work of the Word sure work, which it could not and would not be if it rested in any way upon man.

Our Lord having thus given us an insight into the character of the persons whom he has chosen to proclaim his truth, then goes on to deliver to the chosen champions their commission for the holy war. I pray you mark the words with solemn care. He sums up in a few words the whole of their work, and at the same time foretells the result of it, telling them that some would doubtless believe and so be saved, and some on the other hand would not believe and would most certainly, therefore, be damned; that is, condemned forever to the penalties of God's wrath. The lines containing the commission of our ascended Lord are certainly of the utmost importance, and demand devout attention and implicit obedience, not only from all who aspire to the work of the ministry, but also from all who hear the message of mercy. A clear understanding of these words is absolutely necessary to our success in the Master's work; for if we do not understand the commission, it is not at all likely that we shall discharge it aright. To alter these words were more than impertinence: it

would involve the crime of treason against the authority of Christ and the best interests of the souls of men. Oh for grace to be very jealous here!

Wherever the apostles went they met with obstacles to the preaching of the gospel, and the more open and effectual was the door of utterance, the more numerous were the adversaries. These brave men so wielded the sword of the Spirit as to put to flight all their foes; and this they did not by craft and guile, but by making a direct cut at the error which impeded them. Never did they dream for a moment of adapting the gospel to the unhallowed tastes or prejudices of the people, but at once directly and boldly they brought down with both their hands the mighty sword of the Spirit upon the crown of the opposing error. This morning, in the name of the Lord of Hosts, my helper and defence, I shall attempt to do the same; and if I should provoke some hostility — if I should through speaking what I believe to be the truth lose the friendship of some and stir up the enmity of more — I cannot help it. The burden of the Lord is upon me, and I must deliver my soul. I have been loath enough to undertake the work, but I am forced to it by an awful and overwhelming sense of solemn duty. As I am soon to appear before my Master's bar, I will this day, if ever in my life, bear my testimony for truth, and run all risks. I am content to be cast out as evil if it must be so; but I cannot, I dare not, hold my peace. The Lord knoweth I have nothing in my heart but the purest love to the souls of those whom I feel imperatively called to rebuke sternly in the Lord's name. Among my hearers and readers, a considerable number will censure if not condemn me; but I cannot help it. If I forfeit your love for truth's sake I am grieved for you; but I cannot, I dare not, do otherwise. It is as much as my soul is worth to hold my peace any longer; and, whether you approve or not, I must speak out. Did I ever court your approbation? It is sweet to every one to be applauded; but if for the sake of the comforts of respectability and the smiles of men any Christian minister shall keep back a part of his testimony, his Master at the last shall require it at his hands This

day, standing in the immediate presence of God, I shall speak honestly what I feel, as the Holy Spirit shall enable me; and I shall leave the matter with you to judge concerning it, as you will answer for that judgment at the last, great day.

I find that the great error which we have to contend with throughout England (and it is growing more and more), is one in direct opposition to my text, well known to you as the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. We will confront this dogma with the assertion that *baptism without faith saves no one.* The text says, "He *that believeth* and is baptized shall be saved;" but whether a man be baptized or no, it asserts that "*he that believeth not* shall be damned:" so that baptism does not save the unbeliever; nay, it does not in any degree exempt him from the common doom of all the ungodly. He may have baptism, or he may not have baptism; but if he believeth not, he shall be in any case most surely damned. Let him be baptized by immersion or sprinkling, in his infancy or in his adult age: if he be not led to put his trust in Jesus Christ — if he remaineth an unbeliever — then this terrible doom is pronounced upon him, "He that believeth not shall be damned." I am not aware that any Protestant church in England teaches the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, except one, and that happens to be the corporation which with none too much humility calls itself *the* Church of England. This very powerful sect does not teach this doctrine merely through a section of its ministers, who might charitably be considered as evil branches of the vine, but it openly, boldly, and plainly declares this doctrine in her own appointed standard, the Book of Common Prayer, and that in words so express, that, while language is the channel of conveying intelligible sense, no process short of violent wresting from their plain meaning can ever make them say anything else.

Here are the words — we quote them from the Catechism which is intended for the instruction of youth, and is naturally very plain and simple, since it would be foolish to trouble the youth with metaphysical refinements. The child is asked its name, and then questioned, "Who gave you this name?" "*My*

godfathers and godmothers in my baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." Is not this definite and plain enough? I prize the words for their candor: they could not speak more plainly. Three times over the thing is put, lest there should be any doubt in it. The word *regeneration* may, by some sort of juggling, be made to mean something else; but here there can be no misunderstanding. The child is not only made "a member of Christ," — union to Jesus is no mean spiritual gift, — but he is made in baptism "the child of God" also; and, since the rule is, "if children, then heirs," he is also made "an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." Nothing can be more plain. I venture to say, that, while honesty remains on earth the meaning of these words will not admit of dispute. It is clear as noonday that, as the Rubric hath it, "Fathers, mothers, masters, and dames are to cause their children, servants, and apprentices," no matter how idle, giddy, or wicked they may be, to learn the Catechism, and to say that in baptism they were made members of Christ and children of God. The form for the administration of this baptism is scarcely less plain and outspoken, seeing that thanks are expressly returned unto Almighty God because the person baptized is regenerated: "*Then shall the priest say, 'Seeing, now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits; and with one accord make our prayers unto him, that this child may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning.'*" Nor is this all; for, to leave no mistake, we have the words of the thanksgiving prescribed: "*Then shall the priest say, 'We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy church.'*"

This, then, is the clear and unmistakable teaching of a church calling itself Protestant. I am not now dealing at all with the question of infant baptism: I have nothing to do with that this morning. I am now considering the question of baptismal re-

generation, whether in adults or infants, or ascribed to sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. Here is a church which teaches every Lord's Day in the Sunday-school, and should, according to the Rubric, teach openly in the church, all children that they were made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven when they were baptized! Here is a professedly Protestant church, which, every time its minister goes to the font, declares that every person there receiving baptism is there and then "regenerated and grafted into the body of Christ's church."

"But," I hear many good people exclaim, "there are many good clergymen in the church who do not believe in baptismal regeneration!" To this my answer is prompt, — Why, then, do they belong to a church which teaches that doctrine, in the plainest terms? I am told that many in the Church of England preach against her own teaching. I know they do, and herein I rejoice in their enlightenment, but I question, gravely question, their morality. To take oath that I sincerely assent and consent to a doctrine which I do not believe, would to my conscience appear little short of perjury, if not absolute, downright perjury; but those who do so must be judged by their Lord. For me to take money for defending what I do not believe — for me to take the money of a church, and then to preach against what are most evidently its doctrines — I say *for me* to do this (I shall not judge the peculiar views of other men), for me or for any other simple, honest man to do so, were an atrocity so great that, if I had perpetrated the deed, I should consider myself out of the pale of truthfulness, honesty, and common morality. Sirs, when I accepted the office of minister of this congregation, I looked to see what were your articles of faith. If I had not believed them I should not have accepted your call; and when I change my opinions, rest assured that, as an honest man, I shall resign the office; for how could I profess one thing in your declaration of faith, and quite another thing in my own preaching? Would I accept your pay, and then stand up every Sabbath-day and talk against the doctrines of your standards? For clergy-

men to swear or say that they give their solemn assent and consent to what they do not believe, is one of the grossest pieces of immorality perpetrated in England, and is most pestilential in its influence since it directly teaches men to lie whenever it seems necessary to do so in order to get a living or increase their supposed usefulness: it is in fact an open testimony from priestly lips that, at least in ecclesiastical matters, falsehood may express truth, and truth itself is a mere unimportant nonentity. I know of nothing more calculated to debauch the public mind than a want of straightforwardness in ministers; and when worldly men hear ministers denouncing the very things which their own Prayer-Book teaches, they imagine that words have no meaning among ecclesiastics, and that vital differences in religion are merely a matter of tweedle-dee and tweedle-dum, and that it does not much matter what a man does believe so long as he is charitable towards other people. If baptism does regenerate people, let the fact be preached with a trumpet tongue, and let no man be ashamed of his belief in it. If this be really their creed, by all means let them have full liberty for its propagation. My brethren, those are honest Churchmen in this matter who, subscribing to the Prayer-Book, believe in baptismal regeneration, and preach it plainly. God forbid that we should censure those who believe that baptism saves the soul, because they adhere to a church which teaches the same doctrine. So far they are honest men; and in England, wherever else, let them never lack a full toleration. Let us oppose their teaching by all scriptural and intelligent means, but let us respect their courage in plainly giving us their views. I hate their doctrine, but I love their honesty; and as they speak but what they believe to be true, let them speak it out, and the more clearly the better. Out with it, sirs, be it what it may, but do let us know what you mean. For my part, I love to stand foot to foot with an honest foeman. To open warfare, bold and true hearts raise no objections but the ground of quarrel; it is covert enmity which we have most cause to fear and best reason to loathe. That crafty kindness which inveigles me to sacrifice principle, is the serpent in the

grass — deadly to the incautious wayfarer. Where union and friendship are not cemented by truth, they are an unhallowed confederacy. It is time that there should be an end put to the flirtations of honest men with those who believe one way and swear another. If men believe baptism works regeneration, let them say so; but if they do not so believe it in their hearts, and yet subscribe, and yet more, get their livings by subscribing to words asserting it, let them find congenial associates among men who can equivocate and shuffle, for honest men will neither ask nor accept their friendship.

We ourselves are not dubious on this point: we protest that persons are not saved by being baptized. In such an audience as this, I am almost ashamed to go into the matter, because you surely know better than to be misled. Nevertheless, for the good of others we will drive at it. We hold that persons are not saved by baptism; for we think, first of all, that *it seems out of character with the spiritual religion which Christ came to teach*, that he should make salvation depend upon mere ceremony. Judaism might possibly absorb the ceremony by way of type into her ordinances essential to eternal life; for it was a religion of types and shadows. The false religions of the heathen might inculcate salvation by a physical process; but Jesus Christ claims for his faith that it is purely spiritual, and how could he connect regeneration with a peculiar application of aqueous fluid? I cannot see how it would be a spiritual gospel, but I can see how it would be mechanical, if I were sent forth to teach that the mere dropping of so many drops upon the brow, or even the plunging a person in water, could save the soul. This seems to me to be the most mechanical religion now existing, and to be on a par with the praying windmills of Thibet, or the climbing up and down of Pilate's staircase to which Luther subjected himself in the days of his darkness. The operation of water baptism does not appear even to my faith to touch the point involved in the regeneration of the soul. What is the necessary connection between water and the overcoming of sin? I cannot see any connection which can exist between sprinkling, or immersion, and regen-

eration, so that the one shall necessarily be tied to the other in the absence of faith. Used by faith, had God commanded it, miracles might be wrought; but without faith or even consciousness, as in the case of babes, how can spiritual benefits be connected necessarily with the sprinkling of water? If this be your teaching, that regeneration goes with baptism, I say that it looks like the teaching of a spurious church, which has craftily invented a mechanical salvation to deceive ignorant, sensual, and grovelling minds, rather than the teaching of the most profoundly spiritual of all teachers, who rebuked Scribes and Pharisees for regarding outward rites as more important than inward grace.

But it strikes me that a more forcible argument is, that *the dogma is not supported by facts.* Are all persons who are baptized children of God? Well, let us look at the divine family. Let us mark their resemblance to their glorious Parent! Am I untruthful if I say that thousands of those who were baptized in their infancy are now in our gaols? You can ascertain the fact, if you please, by application to prison authorities. Do you believe that these men, many of whom have been living by plunder, felony, burglary, or forgery, are regenerate? If so, the Lord deliver us from such regeneration. Are these villains members of Christ? If so, Christ has sadly altered since the day when he was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Has he really taken baptized drunkards and harlots to be members of his body? Do you not revolt at the supposition? It is a well-known fact that baptized persons have been hanged. Surely it can hardly be right to hang the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven! Our sheriffs have much to answer for when they officiate at the execution of the children of God, and suspend the members of Christ on the gallows! What a detestable farce is that which is transacted at the open grave, when "a dear brother" who has died drunk is buried in a "sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life," and the prayer that "when we shall depart this life we may rest in Christ, as our hope is that this our brother doth." He is a regenerate brother, who, having defiled the village by constant uncleanness and bes-

tial drunkenness, died without a sign of repentance; and yet the professed minister of God solemnly accords him funeral rites which are denied to unbaptized innocents, and puts the reprobate into the earth in "sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life." If old Rome in her worst days ever perpetrated a grosser piece of imposture than this, I do not read things aright; if it does not require a Luther to cry down this hypocrisy as much as Popery ever did, then I do not even know that twice two make four. Do we find — we who baptize on profession of faith, and baptize by immersion in a way which is confessed to be correct, though not allowed by some to be absolutely necessary to its validity — do we, who baptize in the name of the Sacred Trinity as others do, do we find that baptism regenerates? *We do not.* Neither in the righteous nor the wicked do we find regeneration wrought by baptism. We have never met with one believer, however instructed in divine things, who could trace his regeneration to his baptism; and on the other hand, we confess it with sorrow, but still with no surprise, that we have seen those whom we have ourselves baptized, according to apostolic precedent, go back into the world and wander into the foulest sin, and their baptism has scarcely been so much as a restraint to them, because they have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Facts all show that whatever good there may be in baptism, it certainly does not make a man "a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven," or else many thieves, whoremongers, drunkards, fornicators, and murderers are members of Christ, the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Facts, brethren, are dead against this popish doctrine; and facts are stubborn things.

Yet further, I am persuaded *that the performance styled baptism by the Prayer-Book is not at all likely to regenerate and save.* How is the thing done? One is very curious to know when one hears of an operation which makes men members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, how the thing is done. It must in itself be a holy thing, truthful in all its details, and edifying in every portion. Now, we will

suppose we have a company gathered round the water, be it more or less, and the process of regeneration is about to be performed. We will suppose them all to be *godly people.* The clergyman officiating is a profound believer in the Lord Jesus, and the father and mother are exemplary Christians, and the godfathers and godmothers are all gracious persons. We will suppose this: it is a supposition fraught with charity, but it may be correct. What are these godly people supposed to say? Let us look to the Prayer-Book. The clergyman is supposed to tell these people, "*Ye have heard also that our Lord Jesus Christ hath promised in his gospel to grant all these things that ye have prayed for: which promise he, for his part, will most surely keep and perform. Wherefore, after this promise made by Christ, this infant must also faithfully, for his part, promise by you that are his sureties (until he come of age to take it upon himself) that he will renounce the devil and all his works, and constantly believe God's Holy Word, and obediently keep his commandments.*" This small child is to promise to do this; or, more truly, others are to be taken upon themselves to promise, and even *vow* that he shall do so. But we must not break the quotation, and therefore let us return to the Book: "I demand, therefore, dost thou, in the name of this child, renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that thou wilt not follow, nor be led by them?" Answer: "I renounce them all." That is to say, on the name and behalf of this tender infant about to be baptized, these godly people, these enlightened Christian people, these who know better, who are not dupes, who know all the while that they are promising impossibilities, renounce on behalf of this child what they find it very hard to renounce for themselves,—"all covetous desires of the world and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that they will not follow nor be led by them." How can they harden their faces to utter such a false promise, such a mockery of renunciation, before the presence of the Father Almighty? Might not angels weep as they hear the awful prom-

ise uttered? Then in the presence of High Heaven they profess on behalf of this child that he steadfastly believes the creed, when they know, or might pretty shrewdly judge, that the little creature is not yet a steadfast believer in anything, much less in Christ's going down into hell. Mark, they do not say merely that the babe *shall* believe the creed, but they affirm that he does; for they answer in the child's name, "All this we steadfastly believe." Not *we* steadfastly believe, but *I*, the little baby there, unconscious of all their professions and confessions of faith. In answer to the question, "Wilt thou be baptized in this faith?" they reply for the infant, "That is my desire." Surely the infant has no desire in the matter, or at the least no one has been authorized to declare any desires on his behalf. But this is not all; for then these godly, intelligent people next promise on behalf of the infant that "he shall obediently keep all God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of his life." Now, I ask you, dear friends, you who know what true religion means, can you walk in all God's holy commandments yourselves? Dare you make this day a vow on your own part, that you would renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh? Dare you, before God, make such a promise as that? You desire such holiness; you earnestly strive after it; but you look for it from God's promise, not from your own. If you dare make such vows, I doubt your knowledge of your own hearts and of the spirituality of God's law. But even if you could do this for yourself, would you venture to make such a promise for any other person? — for the best-born infant on earth? Come, brethren, what say you? Is not your reply ready and plain? There is not room for two opinions among men determined to observe truth in all their ways and words. I can understand a simple, ignorant rustic, who has never learned to read, doing all this at the command of a priest and under the eye of a squire. I can even understand persons doing this when the Reformation was in its dawn, and men had newly crept out of the darkness of Popery; but I cannot understand, gracious, godly people

standing at the font to insult the All-gracious Father with vows and promises framed upon a fiction, and involving practical falsehood. How dare intelligent believers in Christ to utter words which they know in their conscience to be wickedly aside from truth? When I shall be able to understand the process by which gracious men so accommodate their consciences, even then I shall have a confirmed belief that the God of truth never did and never will confirm a spiritual blessing of the highest order in connection with the utterance of such false promises and untruthful vows. My brethren, does it not strike you that declarations so fictitious are not likely to be connected with a new birth wrought by the Spirit of truth?

I have not done with this point: I must take another case, and suppose the sponsors and others to be *ungodly;* and that is no hard supposition, for many cases we know that godfathers and parents have no more thought of religion than that idolatrous hallowed stone around which they gather. When these sinners have taken their places, what are they about to say? Why, they are about to make the solemn vows I have already recounted in your hearing? Totally irreligious they are, but yet they promise for the baby what they never did, and never thought of doing, for themselves, — they promise on behalf of this child, "that he will renounce the devil and all his works, and constantly believe God's Holy Word, and obediently keep his commandments." My brethren, do not think I speak severely here. Really, I think there is something here to make mockery for devils. Let every honest man lament that ever God's church should tolerate such a thing as this, and that there should be found gracious people who will feel grieved because I, in all kindness of heart, rebuked the atrocity. Unregenerate sinners promising for a poor babe that he shall keep all God's holy commandments, which they themselves wantonly break every day! How can anything but the longsuffering of God endure this? What! not speak against it? The very stones in the street might cry out against the infamy of wicked men and women promising that another should renounce the devil and all his works, while they themselves serve the devil

and do his works with greediness! As a climax to all this, I am asked to believe that God accepts that wicked promise, and, as the result of it, regenerates that child. You cannot believe in regeneration by this operation, whether saints or sinners are the performers. Take them to be godly, then they are wrong for doing what their conscience must condemn; view them as ungodly, and they are wrong for promising what they know they cannot perform; and in neither case can God accept such worship, much less infallibly append regeneration to such a baptism as this.

But you will say, "Why do *you* cry out against it?" I cry out against it because I believe that baptism does not save the soul, and that *the preaching of it has a wrong and evil influence upon men.* We meet with persons who, when we tell them that they must be born again, assure us that they were born again when they were baptized. The number of these persons is increasing, fearfully increasing, until all grades of society are misled by this belief. How can any man stand up in his pulpit and say "Ye must be born again" to his congregation, when he has already assured them, by his own "unfeigned assent and consent" to it, that they are themselves, every one of them, born again in baptism. What has he to do with them? Why, my dear friends, the gospel then has no voice; they have rammed this ceremony down its throat, and it cannot speak to rebuke sin. The man who has been baptized or sprinkled, says, "I *am* saved; I *am* a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. Who are you, that you should rebuke *me?* Call *me* to repentance? — call *me* to a new life? What better life can I have? for I *am* a member of Christ — a part of Christ's body. What! rebuke *me?* I am a child of God. Cannot you see it in my face? No matter what my walk and conversation is, I am a child of God. Moreover, I am an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. It is true I drink and swear, and all that, but you know I am an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven; for when I die, though I live in constant sin, you will put me in the grave, and tell everybody that I died "in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life."

Now, what can be the influence of such preaching as this upon our beloved England? — upon my dear and blessed country? What but the worst of ills? If I loved her not, but loved myself most, I might be silent here; but, loving England, I cannot and dare not; and having soon to render an account before my God, whose servant I hope I am, I must free myself from this evil, as well as from every other, or else on my head may be the doom of souls.

Here let me bring in another point. It is a most fearful fact, that, *in no age since the Reformation, has Popery made such fearful strides in England as during the last few years.* I had comfortably believed that Popery was only feeding itself upon foreign subscriptions, upon a few titled perverts, and imported monks and nuns. I dreamed that its progress was not real. In fact, I have often smiled at the alarm of many of my brethren at the progress of Popery. But, my dear friends, we have been mistaken, grievously mistaken. If you will read a valuable paper in the magazine called "Christian Work," those of you who are acquainted with it will be perfectly startled at its revelations. This great city is now covered with a network of monks and priests and sisters of mercy, and the conversions made are not by ones or twos, but by scores, till England is being regarded as the most hopeful spot for Romish missionary enterprise in the whole world; and at the present moment there is not a mission which is succeeding to anything like the extent which the English mission is. I covet not their money, I despise their sophistries, but I marvel at the way in which they gain their funds for the erection of their ecclesiastical buildings. It really is an alarming matter to see so many of our countrymen going off to that superstition which as a nation we once rejected, and which it was supposed we should never again receive. Popery is making advances such as you would never believe, though a spectator should tell it to you. Close to your very doors, perhaps even in your own houses, you may have evidence ere long of what a march Romanism is making. And to what is it to be ascribed? I say, with every ground of probability, that there is no marvel

that Popery should increase when you have two things to make it grow: first of all, the falsehood of those who profess a faith which they do not believe, which is quite contrary to the honesty of the Romanist, who does through evil report and good report hold his faith; and then you have, secondly, this form of error known as baptismal regeneration, and commonly called Puseyism, which is not only Puseyism, but Church-of-Englandism, because it is in the Prayer-Book, as plainly as words can express it, — you have this baptismal regeneration, preparing stepping-stones to make it easy for men to go to Rome. I have but to open my eyes a little to foresee Romanism rampant everywhere in the future, since its germs are spreading everywhere in the present. In one of our courts of legislature, but last Tuesday, the Lord Chief Justice showed his superstition, by speaking of "the risk of the calamity of children dying unbaptized!" Among Dissenters you see a veneration for structures, a modified belief in the sacredness of places, which is all idolatry; for to believe in the sacredness of anything but of God and of his own Word, is to idolize, whether it is to believe in the sacredness of the men, the priests, or in the sacredness of the bricks and mortar, or of the fine linen, or what not, which you may use in the worship of God. I see this coming up everywhere — a belief in ceremony, a resting in ceremony, a veneration for altars, fonts, and churches, — a veneration so profound that we must not venture upon a remark, or straightway of sinners we are chief. Here is the essence and soul of Popery, peeping up under the garb of a decent respect for sacred things. It is impossible but that the Church of Rome must spread, when we who are the watchdogs of the fold are silent, and others are gently and smoothly turfing the road, and making it as soft and smooth as possible, that converts may travel down to the nethermost hell of Popery. We want John Knox back again. Do not talk to me of mild and gentle men, of soft manners and squeamish words: we want the fiery Knox; and even though his vehemence should "ding our pulpits into blads," it were well if he did but rouse our hearts to action. We want Luther, to tell men the truth

unmistakably, in homely phrase. The velvet has got into our ministers' mouths of late, but we must unrobe ourselves of soft raiment, and truth must be spoken, and nothing but truth; for of all lies which have dragged millions down to hell, I look upon this as being one of the most atrocious, — that in a Protestant church there should be found those who swear that baptism saves the soul. Call a man a Baptist, or a Presbyterian, or a Dissenter, or a Churchman, — that is nothing to me: if he says that baptism saves the soul, out upon him, out upon him: he states what God never taught, what the Bible never laid down, and what ought never to be maintained by men who profess that the Bible, and the whole Bible, is the religion of Protestants.

I have spoken thus much, and there will be some who will say, spoken thus much bitterly. Very well; be it so. Physic is often bitter, but it shall work well, and the physician is not bitter because his medicine is so; or if he be accounted so, it will not matter, so long as the patient is cured; at all events, it is no business of the patient whether the physician is bitter or not: his business is with his own soul's health. There is the truth, and I have told it to you; and if there should be one among you, or if there should be one among the readers of this sermon when it is printed, who is resting on baptism, or resting upon ceremonies of any sort, I do beseech you, shake off this venomous faith into the fire as Paul did the viper which fastened on his hand. I pray you do not rest on baptism.

> "No outward forms can make you clean:
> The leprosy lies deep within."

I do beseech you to remember that you must have a new heart and a right spirit, and baptism cannot give you these. You must turn from your sins and follow after Christ; you must have such a faith as shall make your life holy and your speech devout, or else you have not the faith of God's elect, and into God's kingdom you shall never come. I pray you never rest upon this wretched and rotten foundation, this deceitful invention of antichrist. Oh! may God save you from it, and bring you to seek the true rock of refuge for weary souls.

I come with much brevity, and I hope with much earnestness, in the second place, to say that FAITH IS THE INDISPENSABLE REQUISITE TO SALVATION. "He that *believeth* and is baptized shall be saved; he that *believeth not* shall be damned." Faith is the one indispensable requisite for salvation. This faith is the gift of God. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. Some men believe not on Jesus; they believe not, because they are not of Christ's sheep, as he himself said unto them; but his sheep hear his voice: he knows them and they follow him; he gives to them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand. What is this believing? Believing consists in two things. First there is *an accrediting of the testimony of God* concerning his Son. God tells you that his Son came into the world and was made flesh; that he lived on earth for men's sake; that after having spent his life in holiness he was offered up a propitiation for sin; that upon the cross he there and then made expiation — so made expiation for the sins of the world that "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." If you would be saved, you must accredit this testimony which God gives concerning his own Son. Having received this testimony, the next thing is to *confide in it.* Indeed, here lies, I think, the essence of saving faith, to rest yourself for eternal salvation upon the atonement and the righteousness of Jesus Christ, to have done once for all with all reliance upon feelings or upon doings, and to trust in Jesus Christ and in what he did for your salvation.

This is faith, receiving of the truth of Christ: first knowing it to be true, and then acting upon that belief. Such a faith as this — such real faith as this — makes the man henceforth hate sin. How can he love the thing which made the Saviour bleed? It makes him live in holiness. How can he but seek to honor that God who has loved him so much as to give his Son to die for him? This faith is spiritual in its nature and effects; it operates upon the entire man; it changes his heart, enlightens his judgment, and subdues his will; it subjects him to God's supremacy, and makes him receive God's Word as a little child, willing to receive

the truth upon the *ipse dixit* of the Divine One; it sanctifies his intellect, and makes him willing to be taught God's Word; it cleanses within; it makes clean the inside of the cup and platter, and it beautifies without; it makes clean the exterior conduct and the inner motive, so that the man, if his faith be true and real, becomes henceforth another man to what he ever was before.

Now that such a faith as this should save the soul, is, I believe, reasonable; yea, more, it is certain, for *we have seen men saved by it* in this very house of prayer. We have seen the harlot lifted out of the Stygian ditch of her sin, and made an honest woman; we have seen the thief reclaimed; we have known the drunkard, in hundreds of instances, to be sobered; we have observed faith to work such a change, that all the neighbors who have seen it have gazed and admired, even though they hated it; we have seen faith deliver men in the hour of temptation, and help them to consecrate themselves and their substance to God; we have seen, and hope still to see yet more widely, deeds of heroic consecration to God and displays of witness-bearing against the common current of the times, which have proved to us that faith does affect the man, does save the soul. My hearers, if you would be saved, you must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me urge you with all my heart to look nowhere but to Christ crucified for your salvation. Oh! if you rest upon any ceremony, though it be not baptism — if you rest upon any other than Jesus Christ — you must perish, as surely as this book is true. I pray you believe not every spirit, but though I, or an angel from heaven, preach any other doctrine than this, let him be accursed; for this, and this alone, is the soul-saving truth which shall regenerate the world — "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Away from all the tag-rags, wax candles, and millinery of Puseyism! away from all the gorgeous romp of Popery! away from the fonts of Church-of-Englandism! We bid you turn your eyes to that naked cross, where hangs as a bleeding sacrifice the Son of God.

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."

There is life in a look at the Crucified; there is life at this moment for you. Whoever among you can believe in the great love of God towards man in Christ Jesus, you shall be saved. If you can believe that our great Father desireth us to come to him — that he panteth for us — that he calleth us every day with the loud voice of his Son's wounds; if you can believe now that in Christ there is pardon for transgressions past, and cleansing for years to come; if you can trust him to save you, you have already the marks of regeneration. The work of salvation is commenced in you, so far as the Spirit's work is concerned; it is finished in you, so far as Christ's work is concerned. Oh! I would plead with you, lay hold on Jesus Christ. This is *the* foundation: build on it. This is *the* rock of refuge: fly to it. I pray you fly to it now. Life is short: time speeds with eagle's wing. Swift as the dove pursued by the hawk, fly, fly, poor sinner, to God's dear Son: now touch the hem of his garment; now look into that dear face, once marred with sorrows for you; look into those eyes, once shedding tears for you. Trust him, and if you find him false, then you must perish; but false you never will find him while this word standeth true, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." God give us this vital, essential faith, without which there is no salvation. Baptized, re-baptized, circumcised, confirmed, fed upon sacraments, and buried in consecrated ground — ye shall all perish except ye believe in him. The Word is express and plain; he that believeth not may plead his baptism, may plead anything he likes, "But he that believeth not shall be damned;" for him there is nothing but the wrath of God, the flames of hell, eternal perdition. So Christ declares, and so must it be.

But now to close, there are some who say, "Ah! but baptism is in the text; where do you put that?" That shall be another point, and then we have done.

THE BAPTISM IN THE TEXT IS ONE EVIDENTLY CONNECTED WITH FAITH. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." It strikes me, there is no supposition here that anybody

would be baptized who did not believe; or if there be such a supposition, it is very clearly laid down that his baptism will be of no use to him, for he will be damned, baptized or not, unless he believes. The baptism of the text seems to me, my brethren, — if you differ from me I am sorry for it, but I must hold my opinion, and out with it, — it seems to me that baptism is connected with, nay, directly follows belief. I would not insist too much upon the order of the words; but, for other reasons, I think that baptism should follow believing. At any rate, it effectually avoids the error we have been combating. A man who knows that he is saved by believing in Christ does not, when he is baptized, lift his baptism into a saving ordinance. In fact, he is the very best protester against that mistake, because he holds that he has no right to be baptized until he is saved. He bears a testimony against baptismal regeneration in his being baptized as professedly an already regenerate person. Brethren, the baptism here meant is a baptism connected with faith, and to this baptism I will admit there is very much ascribed in Scripture. Into that question I am not going; but I do find some very remarkable passages in which baptism is spoken of very strongly. I find this: "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." I find as much as this elsewhere. I know that believer's baptism itself does not wash away sin, yet it is so the outward sign and emblem of it to the believer, that the thing visible may be described as the thing signified. Just as our Saviour said, "This is my body," when it was not his body, but bread; yet, inasmuch as it represented his body, it was fair and right according to the usage of language to say, "Take, eat, this is my body." And so, inasmuch as baptism to the believer representeth the washing of sin — it may be called the washing of sin; not that it is so, but that it is to saved souls the outward symbol and representation of what is done by the power of the Holy Spirit in the man who believes in Christ.

What connection has this baptism with faith? I think it has just this, *baptism is the avowal of faith;* the man was Christ's

soldier, but now in baptism he puts on his regimentals. The man believed in Christ, but his faith remained between God and his own soul. In baptism he says to the baptizer, "I believe in Jesus Christ;" he says to the church, "I unite with you as a believer in the common truths of Christianity;" he saith to the onlooker, "Whatever you may do, as for me, I will serve the Lord." It is the avowal of his faith.

Next, we think baptism is also to the believer a *testimony of his faith;* he does in baptism tell the world what he believes. "I am about," saith he, "to be buried in water. I believe that the Son of God was metaphorically baptized in suffering; I believe he was literally dead and buried." To rise again out of the water sets forth to all men that he believes in the resurrection of Christ. There is a showing forth in the Lord's Supper of Christ's death, and there is a showing forth in baptism of Christ's burial and resurrection. It is a type, a sign, a symbol, a mirror to the world, — a looking-glass, in which religion is as it were reflected. We say to the onlooker, when he asks what is the meaning of this ordinance, "We mean to set forth our faith that Christ was buried, and that he rose again from the dead; and we avow this death and resurrection to be the ground of our trust."

Again, baptism is also *Faith's taking her proper place.* It is, or should be, one of her first acts of obedience. Reason looks at baptism, and says, "Perhaps there is nothing in it; it cannot do me any good." "True," says Faith, "and therefore I will observe it. If it did me some good, my selfishness would make me do it; but inasmuch as to my sense there is no good in it, since I am bidden by my Lord thus to fulfil all righteousness, it is my first public declaration that a thing which looks to be unreasonable and seems to be unprofitable, being commanded by God, is law to me. If my Master had told me to pick up six stones and lay them in a row I would do it, without demanding of him, 'What good will it do?' *Cui bono?* is no fit question for soldiers of Jesus. The very simplicity and apparent uselessness of the ordinance should make the believer say, 'There-

fore I do it because it becomes the better test to me of my obedience to my Master.'" When you tell your servant to do something, and he cannot comprehend it, if he turns round and says, "Please, sir, what for?" you are quite clear that he hardly understands the relation between master and servant. So when God tells me to do a thing, if I say, "What for?" I cannot have taken the place which Faith ought to occupy, which is that of simple obedience to whatever the Lord hath said. Baptism is commanded, and Faith obeys because it is commanded, and thus takes her proper place.

Once more, *baptism is a refreshment to faith.* While we are made up of body and soul as we are, we shall need some means by which the body shall sometimes be stirred up to co-work with the soul. In the Lord's Supper my faith is assisted by the outward and visible sign. In the bread and in the wine I see no superstitious mystery: I see nothing but bread and wine; but in that bread and wine I do see to my faith an assistant. Through the sign my faith sees the thing signified. So in baptism there is no mysterious efficacy in the baptistry or in the water. We attach no reverence to the one or to the other; but we do see in the water and in the baptism such an assistance as brings nome to our faith most manifestly our being buried with Christ, and our rising again in newness of life with him. Explain baptism thus, dear friends, and there is no fear of Popery rising out of it. Explain it thus, and we cannot suppose any soul will be led to trust to it; but it takes its proper place among the ordinances of God's house. To lift it up in the other way, and say men are saved by it — ah! my friends, how much of mischief that one falsehood has done and may do, eternity alone will disclose. Would to God another George Fox would spring up, in all his quaint simplicity and rude honesty, to rebuke the idol-worship of this age; to rail at their holy bricks and mortar, holy lecturns, holy altars, holy surplices, right reverend fathers, and I know not what. These things are not holy. God is holy; his truth is holy: holiness belongs not to the carnal and the material, but to the spiritual. Oh that a trumpet tongue would cry out against

the superstition of the age! I cannot, as George Fox did, give up baptism and the Lord's Supper; but I would infinitely sooner do it, counting it the smaller mistake of the two, than perpetrate and assist in perpetrating the uplifting of baptism and the Lord's Supper out of their proper place. O my beloved friends, the comrades of my struggles and witnessings, cling to the salvation of faith, and abhor the salvation of priests. If I am not mistaken, the day will come when we shall have to fight for a simple spiritual religion far more than we do now. We have been cultivating friendship with those who are either unscriptural in creed or else dishonest; who either believe baptismal regeneration, or profess that they do, and swear before God that they do when they do not. The time is come when there shall be no more truce or parley between God's servants and time-servers. The time is come when those who follow God must follow God, and those who try to trim and dress themselves and find out a way which is pleasing to the flesh and gentle to carnal desires, must go their way. A great winnowing-time is coming to God's saints, and we shall be clearer one of these days than we now are from union with those who are upholding Popery, under the pretence of teaching Protestantism. We shall be clear, I say, of those who teach salvation by baptism, instead of salvation by the blood of our blessed Master, Jesus Christ. Oh, may the Lord gird up your loins! Believe me, it is no trifle. It may be that on this ground Armageddon shall be fought. Here shall come the great battle between Christ and his saints on the one hand, and the world and forms and ceremonies on the other. If we are overcome here, there may be years of blood and persecution, and tossing to and fro between darkness and light; but if we are brave and bold, and flinch not here, but stand to God's truth, the future of England may be bright and glorious. Oh for a truly reformed Church in England, and a godly race to maintain it! The world's future depends on it under God; for in proportion as truth is marred at home, truth is maimed abroad. Out of any system which teaches salvation by baptism must spring infidelity, an infidelity which the false church already seems willing to

nourish and foster beneath her wing. God save this favored land from the brood of her own established religion. Brethren, stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, and be not afraid of any sudden fear nor calamity when it cometh; for he who trusteth to the Lord, mercy shall compass him about, and he who is faithful to God and Christ shall hear it said at the last, "Well done, good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of the Lord." May the Lord bless this word, for Christ's sake.

NOTE. — Having been informed that the whole of the burial service is not usually read at executions, I have, for the sake of fairness, altered the passage upon page 19, although it strikes me that I might justly have retained it, since the Rubric of the Church, and not the practice of some of its ministers, is that with which we must deal. The Rubric says, "The office ensuing is not to be used for any that die unbaptized, or excommunicate, or have laid violent hands upon themselves." The victim of our capital punishment is not by this Rubric shut out from the privileges (?) of the Anglican burial service, unless his condemnation may be viewed as tantamount to excommunication, which I can hardly think to be the case, since many condemned persons receive the sacrament.

SERMON II.

CHILDREN BROUGHT TO CHRIST, NOT TO THE FONT.

"AND THEY BROUGHT YOUNG CHILDREN UNTO HIM, THAT HE SHOULD TOUCH THEM: AND HIS DISCIPLES REBUKED THOSE THAT BROUGHT THEM. BUT WHEN JESUS SAW IT, HE WAS MUCH DISPLEASED, AND SAID UNTO THEM, SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME, AND FORBID THEM NOT: FOR OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD. VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, WHOSOEVER SHALL NOT RECEIVE THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS A LITTLE CHILD, HE SHALL NOT ENTER THEREIN. AND HE TOOK THEM UP IN HIS ARMS, PUT HIS HANDS UPON THEM, AND BLESSED THEM."—MARK X. 13-16.

My attention has been specially directed to this passage by the fact that it has been quoted against me by most of the authors of those sermons and letters which are, by a stretch of imagination, called "replies" to my sermon upon "Baptismal Regeneration." Replies they certainly are not, except to one another. I marvel that a Church so learned as the Anglican cannot produce something a little more worthy of the point in hand. The various authors may possibly have read my discourse, but by reason of mental absorption in other meditations, or perhaps through the natural disturbance of mind caused by guilty consciences, they have talked with confusion of words, and have only been successful in refuting themselves and answering one another. They must have been aiming at something far removed from my sermon, or else I must give them credit for being the worst shots that ever practised with polemical artillery. They do not so much as touch the target in its extreme corners, much less in its centre. The whole question is, Do you believe

that baptism regenerates? If so, prove that your belief is scriptural! Do you believe that baptism does not regenerate? Then justify your swearing that it does? Who will reply to this? He shall merit and bear the palm.

The scripture before us is by several of the champions on the other side exhibited to the people as a rebuke to me. Their reasoning is rather ingenious than forcible: forsooth, because the disciples incurred the displeasure of Jesus Christ by keeping back the little children from coming to *him*, therefore Jesus Christ is greatly displeased with me, and with all others like me, for keeping children from *the font*, and the performance there enacted; and specially displeased with me for exposing the Anglican doctrine of baptismal regeneration! Observe the reasoning, —because Jesus was much displeased with the disciples for hindering parents from seeking a blessing upon their children, therefore he is much displeased with us who do not believe in godfathers and godmothers, or the signing of the cross on the infant brow. I must say at the outset that this is rather a leap of argument, and would not ordinarily be thought conclusive; but this we may readily overlook, since we have long ceased to hope for reasonable arguments from those who support a cause based upon absurdity. My brethren, I concluded that there must be something forcible in such a text as this, or my opponents would not be so eager to secure it. I have therefore carefully looked at it, and, as I have viewed it, it has opened up to me with a sacred splendor of grace. In this incident the very heart of Christ is published to poor sinners, and we may clearly perceive the freeness and the fulness of the mighty grace of the Redeemer of men, who is willing to receive the youngest child as well as the oldest man; and is greatly displeased with any who would keep back seeking souls from coming to him, or loving hearts from bringing others to receive his blessing.

I. In handling this text, in what I believe to be its true light, I shall commence, first of all, by observing that THIS TEXT HAS NOT THE SHADOW OF THE SHADE OF THE GHOST OF A CONNEC-

TION WITH BAPTISM. There is no line of connection so substantial as a spider's web between this incident and baptism, or at least my imagination is not vivid enough to conceive one. This I will prove to you, if you will follow me for a moment.

It is very clear, dear friends, that *these young children were not brought to Jesus Christ by their friends to be baptized.* "They brought young children to him, that he should touch them," says Mark. Matthew describes the children as being brought, "that he would put his hands on them and pray;" but there is not a hint about their being baptized: no godfathers or godmothers had been provided, and no sign of the cross was requested. Surely the parents themselves knew tolerably well what it was they desired, and they would not have expressed themselves so dubiously as to ask him to touch them, when they meant that he should baptize them. The parents evidently had no thought of regeneration by baptism, and brought the children for quite another end.

In the next place, *if they brought the children to Jesus Christ to be baptized, they brought them to the wrong person;* for the Evangelist John, in the fourth chapter and the second verse, expressly assures us that Jesus Christ baptized not, but his disciples. This settles the question, once for all, and proves beyond all dispute that there is no connection between this incident and baptism.

But you will say, "*Perhaps they brought the children to be baptized by the disciples?*" Brethren, the disciples were not in the habit of baptizing infants, and this is clear from the case in hand. If they had been in the habit of baptizing infants, would they have rebuked the parents for bringing them? If it had been a customary thing for parents to bring children with such an object, would the disciples, who had been in the constant habit of performing the ceremony, have rebuked them for attending to it? Would any Church clergyman rebuke parents for bringing their children to be baptized? If he did so, he would act absurdly contrary to his own views and practice; and we cannot therefore imagine that if infant baptism had been the accepted

practice, the disciples could have acted so absurdly as to rebuke the parents for bringing their little ones. It is obvious that such could not have been the practice of the disciples who were rebuked.

Moreover, and here is an argument which seems to me to have great force in it, *when Jesus Christ rebuked his disciples, then was the time, if ever in his life, to have openly spoken concerning infant baptism, godfathers and godmothers, and the whole affair.* If he wished to rebuke his disciples most effectually, how could he have done it better than by saying, "Wherefore keep ye these children back? I have ordained that they shall be baptized; I have expressly commanded that they shall be regenerated and made members of my body in baptism: how dare you, then, in opposition to my will, keep them back?" But no, dear friends: our Saviour never said a word about "the laver of regeneration," or, "the quickening dew," when he rebuked them — not a single sentence. Had he done so, the season would have been most appropriate if it had been his intention to teach the practice; in the whole of his life, there is no period in which a discourse upon infant regeneration in baptism could have been more appropriate than on this occasion; and yet not a single sentence about it comes from the Saviour's lips

To close all, *Jesus Christ did not baptize the children.* Our evangelist does not inform us that he exclaimed, "Where are the godfathers and godmothers?" it is not recorded that he called for a font, or a Prayer-Book?" No; but "He took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them," and dismissed them without a drop of the purifying element. Now, if this event had any connection with baptism whatever, it was the most appropriate occasion for infant baptism to have been practised. Why, it would have ended forever the controversy. There may be some men in the world who would have raised the question of engrafting infants into the body of Christ's church by baptism after all this, but I am certain no honest man would have done so who reverently accepted Christ as his spiritual leader. I, my brethren, would sooner be dumb than speak

a single word against an ordinance which Christ himself instituted and practised; and if on this occasion he had but sprinkled one of these infants, given him a Christian name, signed him with a cross, accepted the vows of his godparents, and thanked God for his regeneration, then the question would have been settled forever, and some of us would have been saved a world of abuse, besides escaping no end of mistakes, for which we are condemned, in the judgment of many good people, for whom we have some affection, though for their judgment we have no respect.

So you see the parents did not ask baptismal regeneration; Christ did not personally baptize; the disciples were not in the habit of baptizing infants, or else they would not have rebuked the parents; Christ did not speak about baptism on the occasion, and he did not baptize the little ones.

I will put a case to you which may exhibit the weakness of my opponents' position. Suppose a denomination should rise up which should teach that babes should be allowed to partake at the Lord's Table. Such teaching could plead precedents of great antiquity, for you are aware that at one period infant communion was allowed, and logically too; for if an infant has a right to baptism, it has a right to come to the Lord's Table. For years children were brought to the Lord's Table, but rather inconvenient accidents occurred, and therefore the thing was dropped as being unseemly. But if some one should revive the error, and try to prove that infants are to come to the Lord's Supper, he might prove it from this passage quite as clearly as our friends can prove infant baptism from it. Moreover, do not forget that even if infant baptism could be proved from this text, the ceremony prescribed in the Prayer-Book is quite as far from being established. Whether the baptism of infants may or may not be proved from other Scriptures I cannot now stay to inquire; but even if it can be, what are we to say for godfathers or godmothers, or the assertion that in baptism children are made "members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven?" Truly I might as well prove vaccination from

the text before me, as the performance which the Prayer-Book calls "infant baptism." I do not hesitate to say that I could prove any earthly thing, if I might but have such reasoning granted to me as that which proves infant baptism from this passage. There is no possible connection between the two. The teaching of the passage is very plain and very clear, and baptism has been imported into it, and not found in it. As a quaint writer has well said, "These doctrines are raised from the text as our collectors raise a tax upon indigent, nonsolvent people, by coming armed with the law and a constable to distrain for that which is not to be had. Certainly never was text so strained and distrained to pay what it never owed; never man so racked to confess what he never thought; never was a pumice-stone so squeezed for water which it never held." Still hundreds will catch at this straw, and cry, "Did not Jesus say, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me?'" To these we give this one word, See that ye read the word as it is written, and you will find no water in it, but Jesus only. Are the water and Christ the same thing? Is bringing a child to a font bringing the child to Christ? Nay, here is a wide difference, as wide as between Rome and Jerusalem, as wide as between antichrist and Christ, between false doctrine and the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Now for our second, and much more pleasing task, WHY, THEN, WAS JESUS CHRIST DISPLEASED?

Read the passage, and at once the answer comes to you. He was displeased with his disciples for two reasons: first, *because they discouraged those who would bring others to him;* and, secondly, *because they discouraged those who themselves were anxious to come to him.* They did not discourage those who were coming to a font, they discouraged those who were coming to Jesus. There is a mighty distinction ever to be held between the font and Christ, between the sprinkling of the priest and living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

First, *his disciples discouraged those who would bring others to him.* This is a great sin, and wherever it is committed Jesus

Christ is greatly displeased; for a true desire to see others saved is wrought in the believer by God the Holy Spirit, who thus renders one of the chosen the means of bringing wandering sheep into the fold. In this case they discouraged those who would bring *children* to him to be blessed. How can we bring children to Jesus Christ to be blessed? We cannot do it in a corporeal sense, for Jesus is not here, "he is risen;" but we can bring our children in a true, real, and spiritual sense. We take them up in the arms of our *prayer*. I hope many of us, so soon as our children saw the light, if not before, presented them to God with this anxious prayer, that they might sooner die than live to disgrace their father's God. We only desired children that we might in them live over again another life of service to God; and when we looked into their young faces, we never asked wealth for them, nor fame, nor anything else, but that they might be dear unto God, and that their names might be written in the Lamb's Book of Life. We did then bring our children to Christ, as far as we could do it, by presenting them before God, by earnest prayer on their behalf. And have we ceased to bring them to Christ? Nay, I hope we seldom bow the knee without praying for our children. Our daily cry is, "Oh that they might live before thee!" God knows that nothing would give us more joy than to see evidence of their conversion; our souls would almost leap out of our bodies with joy, if we should but know that they were the children of the living God. Nor has this privilege been denied to us, for there are some here who can rejoice in a converted household. Truly we can say, with the Apostle Paul, "I have no greater joy than this, that my children walk in the truth." We continue, therefore, to bring them to Christ by daily, constant, earnest prayer on their behalf. So soon as they become of years capable of understanding the things of God, we endeavor to bring them to Christ by *teaching them the truth*. Hence our Sabbath-schools, hence the use of the Bible, and family prayer, and catechising at home. Any person who shall forbid us to pray for our children, will incur Christ's high displeasure; and any who shall say, "Do not teach your

children; they will be converted in God's own time, if it be his purpose; therefore leave them to run wild in the streets," will certainly both "sin against the child" and the Lord Jesus. We might as well say, "If that piece of ground is to grow a harvest, it will do so if it be God's good pleasure; therefore leave it, and let the weeds spring up and cover it: do not endeavor for a moment to kill the weeds, or sow the good seed." Why, such reasoning as this would be not only cruel to our children, but grievously displeasing to Christ. Parents, I do hope you are all endeavoring to bring your children to Christ by teaching them the things of God. Let them not be strangers to the plan of salvation. Never let it be said that a child of yours reached years in which his conscience could act, and he could judge between good and evil, without knowing the doctrine of the atonement, without understanding the great substitutionary work of Christ. Set before your child life and death, hell and heaven, judgment and mercy, his own sin, and Christ's most precious blood; and as you set these before him, labor with him persuade him, as the apostle did his congregation, with tears and weeping, to turn unto the Lord; and your prayers and supplications shall be heard, so that the Spirit of God shall bring them to Jesus. How much more like the Scripture will such labors be than if you were to sing the following very pretty verse which disfigures Roundell Palmer's "Book of Praise!"—

"Though thy conception was in sin,
A sacred bathing thou has had;
And though thy birth unclean has been,
A blameless babe thou now art made.
Sweet baby, then forbear to weep;
Be still, my dear, sweet baby, sleep."

I cannot tell you how much I owe to the solemn words of my good mother. It was the custom on Sunday evenings, while we were yet little children, for her to stay at home with us, and then we sat round the table and read verse by verse, and she explained the Scripture to us. After that was done, then came the time of pleading; there was a little piece of "Alleyn's Alarm,"

or of "Baxter's Call to the Unconverted," and this was read with pointed observations made to each of us as we sat round the table; and the question was asked how long it would be before we would think about our state, how long before we would seek the Lord. Then came a mother's prayer, and some of the words of a mother's prayer we shall never forget, even when our hair is gray. I remember on one occasion her praying thus: "Now, Lord, if my children go on in their sins, it will not be from ignorance that they perish, and my soul must bear a swift witness against them at the day of judgment, if they lay not hold of Christ." That thought of a mother's bearing swift witness against me, pierced my conscience and stirred my heart. This pleading with them for God and with God for them is the true way to bring children to Christ. Sunday-school teachers, you have a high and noble work; press forward in it! In our schools you do not try to bring children to the baptistry for regeneration, you point them away from ceremonies; if I know the teachers of this school aright, I know you are trying to bring your classes to Christ. Let Christ be the sum and substance of your teaching in the school. Young men and young women, in your classes lift up Christ, lift him up on high; and if anybody shall say to you, "Why do you talk thus to the children?" you can say, "Because my soul yearns towards them, and I pant for their conversion;" and if any should afterward object, you remember that Jesus is greatly displeased with *them*, and not you, for you only obey the injunction, "Feed my lambs."

The case in our text is that of children; but objectors rise up who disapprove of endeavors to bring any sort of people to Christ by faith and prayer. There are some who spend their nights in the streets seeking after the poor harlot, and I have heard many harsh observations made about their work; some will say it is ridiculous to expect that any of those who spend their days in debauchery should be really converted. We are told that the most of those who are taken into the refuges go back and become as depraved as ever; I believe that to be a very sad and solemn truth; but I believe, if I or any one else shall urge that or

anything else as a reason why my brethren should not seek the harlot, that Jesus would be greatly displeased; for any man who stands between a soul-seeker and the divine object of getting a blessing for the sinner's soul, excites the wrath of Christ. Some have hopes of our convicts and criminals; but every now and then there is an outcry against those who even believe it possible for a transport or a ticket-of-leave man to be converted. But Jesus is greatly displeased with any who shall say about the work, "It is too hard; it is impossible." My brethren in Christ, labor for souls of all sorts; for your children, and for those who are past the three-score years and ten. Seek out the drunkard; go after the thief; despise not the poor, down-trodden slave; let every race, let every color, let every age, let every profession, let every nation, be the object of your soul's prayers. You live in this world, I hope, to bring souls to Jesus; you are Christ's magnets, with which, through his Holy Spirit, he will attract hearts of steel: you are his heralds; you are to invite wanderers to come to the banquet: you are his messengers; you are to compel them to come in that his house may be filled; and if the devil tells you you will not succeed, and if the world tells you that you are too feeble and have not talent enough, never mind; Jesus would be greatly displeased with you if you should take any heed to them; and meanwhile he is greatly displeased with your adversaries for endeavoring to stop you. Beloved, this is why Jesus Christ was greatly displeased.

A second ground of displeasure must be noticed. These children, it strikes me, and I think there is good reason for the belief, themselves desired to come to Christ to obtain a blessing. They are called "little children," which term does not necessarily involve their being infants of six months or a year; indeed, it is clear, as I will show in a moment, that they were not such little children as to be unconscious babes. They were "infants," according to our version of Luke; but then you know the English word "infant" includes a considerable range of age, for every person in his minority is legally considered to be an infant, though he may be able to talk to any amount. We do not, how-

ever, desire to translate the text with so great a license. There is no necessity in the language used that these should have been anything but what they are said to be — "little children." It is evident they could walk, because in Luke it is said, "Jesus called *them*;" the gender of the Greek pronoun used there refers it to the children, not to the persons, nor to the disciples. Jesus called them, he called the children, which he would hardly have done if they could not comprehend his call; and he said, "Suffer the little children to come," which implies that they could come, and doubtless they did come, with cheerful faces, expecting to get the blessing. These perhaps may have been some of those very children who, a short time after, pulled down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way, and cried, "Hosanna," when the Saviour said, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength." Now Christ was greatly displeased with his disciples for pushing back these boys and girls. They did as some old folks do now-a-days, who cry out — "Stand back, you boys and girls! we do not want you here; we do not want children to fill up the place; we only want grown-up people." They pushed them back; they thought that Christ would have too much to do if he attended to the juveniles. Here comes out this principle, that we must expect Christ's displeasure if we attempt to keep anybody back from coming to Christ, even though it be the youngest child. You ask how persons can come to Christ now? They cannot come corporeally, but they can come by simple prayer and humble faith. Faith is the way to Jesus, baptism is not. When Jesus says, "Come *unto me* all ye that labor and are heavy laden," he did not mean, "be baptized," did he? No; and so when he said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," he did not mean, "Baptize them," did he? Coming to Jesus Christ is quite a different thing from coming to a font. Coming to Christ means laying hold upon Christ with the hand of faith; looking to him for my life, my pardon, my salvation, my everything. If there be a poor little child here who is saying in her little heart, or his little heart, "I would like to come to Christ; oh that I might be par-

doned while I am yet a little one!" — come, little lamb; come, and welcome. Did I hear your cry? Was it this?

> "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
> Look upon a little child;
> Pity my simplicity,
> Suffer me to come to thee."

Dear little one, Jesus will not despise your lispings, nor will his servant keep you back. Jesus calls you; come and receive his blessing. If any of you say a word to keep the young heart back, Jesus will be displeased with you. Now I am afraid some do that; those, for instance, who think that the gospel is not for little children. Many of my brethren, I am sorry to say, preach in such a way that there is no hope of children ever getting any good by their preaching. I cannot glory in learning or eloquence, but in this one thing I may rejoice, that there is always a number of happy children here, who are quite as attentive as any of my audience. I do love to think that the gospel is suitable to little children. There are boys and girls in many of our Sabbath-school classes down below stairs who are as truly converted to God as any of us. Nay, and if you were to speak with them about the things of God, though you should get to the knotty points of election and predestination, you would find those boys and girls well taught in the things of the kingdom; they know free will from free grace, and you cannot puzzle them when you come to talk about the work of Jesus and the work of the Spirit, for they can discern between things which differ. But a minister who preaches as though he never wanted to bring children to Christ, and shoots right over the little ones' heads, I do think Jesus is displeased with him.

Then there are others who doubt whether children ever will be converted. They do not look upon it as a thing likely to happen; and whenever they hear of a believing child, they hold up their hands at the prodigy, and say, "What a wonder of grace!" It ought to be, and in those churches where the gospel is simply preached, it is as common a thing for children to be converted as for grown-up people to be brought to Christ. Oth-

ers begin to doubt the truth of juvenile conversions. They say, "They are very young — can they understand the gospel? Is it not merely an infantile emotion, a mere profession?" My brethren, you have no more right to suspect the sincerity of the young than to mistrust the gray-headed; you ought to receive them with the same open-breasted confidence with which you receive others when they profess to have found the Saviour. Do, I pray you, whenever you see the faintest desire in your children, go down on your knees, as your servant does, when the fire is almost out, and blow the spark with your own breath; seek by prayer to fan that spark to a flame. Do not despise any godly remark the child may make. Do not puff thy child up on account of the goodness of the remark, lest you make him vain and so injure him, but do encourage him; let his first little prayers be noticed by you; though you may not like to teach him a form of prayer, — I shall not care if you do not, — yet teach him what prayer is; tell him to express his desires in his own words, and when he does so, join ye in it and plead with God on his behalf that your little one may speedily find true peace in a Saviour's blood. You must not, unless you would displease my Master, keep back the smallest child that longs to come to Christ.

Here let us observe that the principle is of general applications you must not hinder any awakened soul from seeking the Saviour. O my brethren and sisters, I hope we have such a love for souls, such an instinct within us to desire to see the travail of Christ's soul, that, instead of putting stumbling-blocks in the way, we would do the best we could to gather out the stones. On Sabbath-days I have labored to clear up the doubts and fears which afflict coming sinners; I have entreated God the Holy Spirit to enable me so to speak, that those things which hindered you from coming to the Saviour might be removed; but how sad must be the case of those who delight themselves in putting stumbling-blocks in men's way. The doctrine of election, for instance, a great and glorious truth, full of comfort to God's people — how often is that made to frighten sinners from Jesus! There is a way of preaching that doctrine, in which you make it put on

a black and ugly face, and stand with a drawn sword, and say, "You must not come unless you know you are one of God's elect." That is not the way to preach the doctrine. The true way of preaching it is, "God has a chosen people, and I hope you are one of them; come, lay hold on Jesus, put your trust in him." Then there be others who preach up frames and feelings as a preparation for Christ. They do in effect say, "Unless you have felt so much depression of spirit, or experienced a certain quantity of brokenness of heart, you must not come to Christ," instead of declaring that whosoever will is permitted to come, and that the true way of coming to Christ is not with a qualification of frames and feelings and mental depressions, but just as you are. Oh! it is my soul's delight to preach a gospel which has an open door to it, to preach a mercy-seat which has no veil before it; it is rent in twain, and now the biggest sinner out of hell, who desires to come, is welcome. You who are eighty years of age, and have hated Christ all the time, if now the Spirit of God makes you willing to come, Christ seems to say, "Suffer the gray-headed to come unto me, and forbid them not:" while to you little children he stretches out his arms in the same manner, "Suffer the little children to come unto me." O my beloved, see to it that your heart longs to come to Christ, and not to ceremonies! I stand here this day to cry, "Come ye to the cross, not to the font." When I forget to lift up the Lord Jesus, and to cast down the forms of man's devising, "let my right hand forget her cunning," and "let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth."

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good."

The font is a mockery and an imposition if it be put before Christ. If you have baptism after you have come to Christ, well and good; but to point you to it either as being Christ, or as being inevitably connected with Christ, or as being the place to find Christ, is nothing better than to go back to the beggarly elements of the old Romish harlot, instead of standing in the "liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," and bidding the sinner to come as a sinner to Christ Jesus, and to Christ Jesus alone.

III. In the third and last place, let us also gather from our text that WHEN WE DISCOURAGE ANY, WE ALWAYS GO UPON WRONG GROUNDS. Here was the case of children. I suppose that the grounds upon which the apostles kept back the children would be one of these, — either that the children could not receive a blessing, or else that they could not receive it worthily.

Did they imagine that these little children could not receive the blessing? Perhaps so, for they thought them too young. Now, brethren, that was a wrong ground to go upon; for these children could receive the blessing, and they did receive it, for Jesus took them in his arms and blessed them. If I keep back a child from coming to Christ on the ground that he is too young, I do it in the face of facts; because there have been children brought to Christ at an extremely early period. You who are acquainted with Janeway's "Tokens for Children," have noticed very many beautiful instances of early conversion. Our dear friend Mrs. Rogers, in that book of hers, "The Folded Lamb," gave a sweet picture of a little son of hers, soon folded in the Saviour's bosom above, who, as early as two or three years of age, rejoiced and knew the Saviour. I do not doubt at all, I cannot doubt it, because one has seen such cases, that children of two or three years of age may have a precocity of knowledge and of grace, a forwardness which in almost every case has betokened early death, but which has been perfectly marvellous to those who have talked with them. The fact is that we do not all at the same age arrive at that degree of mental stature which is necessary for understanding the things of God. Children have been reported as reading Latin, Greek, and other languages, at five or six years of age. I do not know that such early scholarship is any great blessing: it is better not to reach that point so soon; but some children are all that their minds ever will be at three or four, and then they go home to heaven; and so long as the mind has been brought up to such a condition that it is capable of understanding, it is also capable of faith, if the Holy Spirit shall implant it. To suppose that he ever did give faith to an unconscious babe is ridiculous; that there can be any

faith in a child that knows nothing whatever I must always take ground to doubt, for "How shall they believe without a preacher?" And yet they are brought up to make a profession in their long-clothes, when they have never heard a sermon in their lives But those dear children to whom I have before referred, have understood the preacher, have understood the truth, have rejoiced in the truth, and their first young lispings have been as full of grace as those glorious expressions of aged saints in their triumphant departures. Children are capable, then, of receiving the grace of God. Do mark, by the way, that all those champions who have come out against me so valiantly have made a mistake; they have said that we deny that little infants may be regenerated; we do not deny that God can regenerate them if he pleases; we do not know anything about what may or may not happen to unconscious babes; but we did say that little children were not regenerated by their godparents telling lies at a font: we did say that, and we say it again, that little children are not regenerated, nor made members of Christ, nor children of God, nor inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, by a solemn mockery, in which godfathers and godmothers promise to do for them what they cannot do for themselves, much less for their children. That is the point; and if they will please to meet it, we will answer them again; but till such time as that, we shall probably let them talk on till God gives them grace to know better.

The other ground upon which the apostles put back the children would be, that although the children might receive the blessing, *they might not be able to receive it worthily.* The Lord Jesus, in effect, assures them that so far from the way in which a little child enters into the kingdom of heaven being exceptional, it is the rule; and the very way in which a child enters the kingdom, is the way in which everybody must enter it. How does a child enter the kingdom of heaven? Why, its faith is very simple: it does not understand mysteries and controversies, but it believes what it is told, upon the authority of God's Word, and it comes to God's Word without previous prejudice. It has

its natural sinfulness, but grace overcomes it, and the child receives the Word as it finds it. You will notice in boyish and girlish conversions, a peculiar simplicity of belief: they believe just what Christ says, exactly what he says. If they pray, they believe Christ will hear them: if they talk about Jesus, it is as of a person near at hand. They do not, as we do, get into the making of these things into mysteries and shadows; but little children have a realizing power. Then they have great rejoicing. The most cheerful Christians we have are young believers; and the most cheerful old Christians are those who were converted when they were young. Why, see the joy of a child that finds a Saviour! "Mother," he says, "I have sought Jesus Christ, and I have trusted him, and I am saved." He does not say, "I hope," and "I trust," but "I am;" and then he is ready to leap for joy because he is saved. Of the many boys and girls whom we have received into church-fellowship, I can say of them all, they have all gladdened my heart, and I have never received any with greater confidence than I have these: this I have noticed about them, they have greater joy and rejoicing than any others; and I take it, it is because they do not ask so many questions as others do, but take Jesus Christ's word as they find it, and believe in it. Well, now, just the very way in which a child receives Christ, is the way in which you must receive Christ, if you would be saved. You who know so much that you know *too* much; you who have big brains; you who are always thinking, and have a tendency to criticism, and perhaps to scepticism, you must come and receive the gospel as a little child. You will never get a hold of my Lord and Master while you are wearing that quizzing-cap; no, you must take it off, and by the power of the Holy Spirit you must come trusting Jesus, simply trusting him; for this is the right way to receive the kingdom.

But here, let me say, the principle which holds good in little children holds good in all other cases as well. Take, for instance, the case of very great sinners, men who have been gross offenders against the laws of their country. Some would say they

cannot be saved; they can be, for some of them have been. Others would say they never receive the truth as it is in Jesus in a right manner; ay, but they do. How do great sinners receive Christ? There are some here who have been reclaimed from drunkenness, and I know not what. My brethren, how did you receive Christ? Why, in this way: You said, "All unholy, all unclean, I am nothing else but sin; but if I am saved, it will be grace, grace, grace." Why, when you and I stood up, black and foul and filthy, and yet dared to believe in Christ, we said, "If we are saved, we shall be prodigies of divine mercy, and we will sing of his love forever." Well but, my dear friends, you must all receive Jesus Christ in that very way. That which would raise an objection to the salvation of the big sinner is thrown back upon you, for Christ might well say, "Except ye receive these things as the chief of sinners, ye cannot enter the kingdom." I will prove my point by the instance of the Apostle Paul. He has been held by some to be an exception to the rule; but Paul did not think so, for he says that God in him showed forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them that believe, and made him as it were a type of all conversions; so that instead of being an exception, his was to be the rule. You see what I am driving at. The case of the children looks exceptional, but it is not; it has, on the contrary, all the features about it which must be found in every true conversion. It is of such that the kingdom of heaven is composed, and if we are not such we cannot enter it. Let this induce all of us who love the Lord to pray for the conversion both of children and of all sorts of men. Let our compassion expand, let us shut out none from the plea of our heart; in prayer and in faith let us bring all who come under our range, hoping and believing that some of them will be found in the election of grace, that some of them will be washed in the Saviour's blood, and that some of them will shine as stars in the firmament of God forever. Let us, on no consideration, believe that the salvation of any man or child is beyond the range of possibility, for the Lord saveth whom he wills. Let no difficulties which seem to surround the case hinder our efforts;

let us, on the contrary, push with greater eagerness forward, believing that where there seems to be some special difficulty, there will be manifested, as in the children's case, some special privilege. Oh, labor for souls, my dear friends! I beseech you, live to win souls. This is the best rampart against error, a rampart built of living stones — converted men and women. This is the way to push back the advances of Popery, by imploring the Lord to work conversions. I do not think that mere controversial preaching will do much, though it must be used; it is grace-work we want; it is bringing you to Christ, it is getting you to lay hold of him, — it is this which shall put the devil to a nonplus and expand the kingdom of Christ. Oh that my God would bring some of you to Jesus! If he is displeased with those who would keep you back, then see how willing he is to receive you. Is there in your soul any desire towards him? Come and welcome, sinner, come. Do you feel now that you must have Christ or die? Come and have him; he is to be had for the asking. Has the Lord taught you your need of Jesus? Ye thirsty ones, come and drink; ye hungry ones, come and eat Yea, this is the proclamation of the gospel to-day, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." I do trust there may be encouragement in this to some of you. I pray my Master make you feel it. If he be angry with those who keep you back, then he must be willing to receive you, glad to receive you; and if you come to him he will in nowise cast you out. May the Lord add his blessing on these words for Jesus' sake. **Amen.**

SERMON III

"THUS SAITH THE LORD;"

OR, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER WEIGHED IN THE BALANCES OF THE SANCTUARY

"THUS SAITH THE LORD."—Ezek. xi. 5.

THE wise man saith, "Where the word of a king is, there is power." What power must there be where there is the word of the King of kings, who ruleth over all! We are not left to conjecture as to the power of the divine word, for we know that "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." Out of nothingness the glorious creation leaped at the bidding of the Most High, and when the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, there was nothing wanted but that solemn voice, "Light be," and straightway light was. God's word was sufficient in itself to build the temple of the universe, and to finish it from its foundations to its pinnacles. That same word upholdeth by its power, and ruleth all things by its might. The pillars of heaven stand because the divine word hath fixed them upon their bases, nor shall they be shaken until that same almighty word shall bid them remove; then as a moment's foam dissolves into the wave which bears it and is gone forever, so shall the whole creation melt away. His word, which created, shall also destroy; but until that word be spoken every atom of this world is imperishable. Consider, my brethren, what power is concentrated in him who is clothed with a vesture

dipped in blood, and whose name is "THE WORD OF GOD." With what glorious power our Lord Jesus Christ uplifted the burden of our sins, carried the load up to the tree, and cast it forever into the Red Sea of his own atoning blood! Ye know how he burst the bars of death, tore away the gates of the grave, overthrew all the hosts of hell, and dragged the mightiest principalities of darkness as captives at his chariot wheels. At this day the government is upon his shoulders, and his name is the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father. Heaven and earth salute him as the Omnipotent Word. He sustains the spiritual life of all his people by feeding them upon himself; and he shall in due time perfect his saints, and present them without spot before his Father's throne. We ought, therefore, to bow with reverence to that which is truly the word of God, since it contains within itself the highest degree of power, and is ever the way in which divine omnipotence manifests itself.

It is in the word that we must find wisdom and power: "because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." The faintest whisper of Jehovah's voice should fill us with a solemn awe, and command the deepest obedience of our souls. Brethren, how careful should we be that we do not set up in God's temple anything in opposition to his word, that we do not permit the teachings of a creature to usurp the honor due to the Lord alone! "Thus saith antiquity," "thus saith authority," "thus saith learning," "thus saith experience," — these be but idol-gods, which defile the temple of God: be it yours and mine, as bold iconoclasts, to dash them in pieces without mercy, seeing that they usurp the place of the word of God.

"*Thus saith the Lord*" — this is the motto of our standard, the war-cry of our spiritual conflict, — the sword with which we hope yet to smite through the loins of the mighty who rise up against God's truth. Nothing shall stand before this weapon in the day when God cometh out of his hiding-place; for even at this hour, when "Thus saith the Lord" sounds from the trumpet of the Lord's ministers, the hosts of Midian begin to tremble; for well they know the might of that terrible watchword in days of yore.

This morning I shall first endeavor to show, briefly, *the value of a "Thus saith the Lord;"* and then, secondly, I shall, with as much calmness of spirit as I can command, *request a "Thus saith the Lord" for certain things which are received and practised in the State Establishment of our land*, and close with *a word of personal application*, beseeching you to seek a "Thus saith the Lord" for any hopes which you may entertain of being partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

I. LET US CONSIDER THE VALUE OF A "THUS SAITH THE LORD."

1. Our *first* observation is that it is *the minister's message*. If he be God's minister, he does not found his teaching upon his own authority, for then his message would be only that of himself, and not to be esteemed; but he shows the authority of his Master, and none can gainsay him. He claims men's attention on the ground that he utters a "Thus saith the Lord." No matter how aged he may be, he does not proclaim the truth as merely the result of his long investigations or his extraordinary experience, but he grounds it upon "Thus saith the Lord." So spake the hoary-headed Joshua when for many a year he had known the faithfulness of God, and was about to die. He was singing his swan-song, preaching his last sermon; but he did not commence it, "Thus saith my age," "Thus say I upon mine own authority," but "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel." A God-sent minister is the ambassador of the Most High, but he has no right to go beyond his commission; and when he does so, his office cannot yield him support. The prophets of God did not say, "Thus I speak as a prophet," but, "Thus saith the Lord." When the prophet came in Gideon's days and spake to erring Israel, he opened his mouth with, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel." Turn to the pages of Isaiah, and mark how frequently he quotes the divine authority; study the plaintive words of Jeremiah, and observe how solemnly his prophetic woes are prefaced with, "Thus saith the Lord;" and the soaring Ezekiel, to whom was given, as it were, six wings, that he might take more

lofty flights than the eagle knoweth — even he relied not upon the sublimity of his language or the glory of his imagery, but found the sinews of his strength in "Thus saith the Lord God." This is the trowel and this the hammer of God's builders, — this the trumpet of his watchmen and the sword of his warriors. Woe to the man who comes in any other name! If we, or an angel from heaven, shall preach unto you anything but a "Thus saith the Lord," no matter what our character or standing, give no heed to us, but cleave unto the truth as it is in Jesus. To the law and to the testimony, if we speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in us. That test which we demand to be exercised upon others we cheerfully consent to be exercised upon ourselves, praying that we may have grace to forsake our errors as we would have other men forsake theirs.

2. "Thus saith the Lord" *is the only authority in God's church.* When the tabernacle was pitched in the wilderness, what was the authority for its length and breadth? Why was the altar of incense to be placed here, and the brazen laver there? Why so many lambs or bullocks to be offered on a certain day? Why must the passover be roasted whole and not sodden? Simply and only because God had shown all these things to Moses in the holy mount; and thus had Jehovah spoken, "Look that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount." It is even so in the church at the present day; true servants of God demand to see for all church ordinances and doctrines the express authority of the church's only Teacher and Lord. They remember that the Lord Jesus bade the apostles to teach believers to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them; but he neither gave to them nor to any man power to alter his own commands. The Holy Ghost revealed much of precious truth and holy precept by the apostles, and to his teaching we would give earnest heed; but when men cite the authority of fathers and councils and bishops, we give place for subjection? — no, not for an hour. They may quote Irenæus or Cyprian, Augustine or Chrysostom; they may remind us of the dogmas of Luther or Calvin; they may find authority in Simeon,

Wesley, or Gill — we will listen to the opinions of those great men with the respect which they deserve *as men;* but having so done, we deny that we have anything to do with these men as authorities in the church of God: for there nothing has any authority but "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts." Yea, if you shall bring us the concurrent consent of all tradition — if you shall quote precedents venerable with fifteen, sixteen, or seventeen centuries of antiquity — we burn the whole as so much worthless lumber, unless you put your finger upon the passage of Holy Writ which warrants the matter to be of God. You may further plead, in addition to all this venerable authority, the beauty of the ceremony, and its usefulness to those who partake therein, but this is all foreign to the point; for to the true church of God the only question is this: Is there a "Thus saith the Lord" for it? And if divine authority be not forthcoming, faithful men thrust forth the intruder as the cunning craftiness of men.

3. "Thus saith the Lord" *is the most fitting word of rebuke for erring saints.* God's people when they err, if they be rebuked, even though it should be in the gentlest manner, are too apt to resent the rebuff; but when we can come to them with "Thus saith the Lord," if there be a spark of spiritual life left, it is sure to catch at this flame. When the man of God came to Eli, how Eli's heart trembled when he began, "Thus saith the Lord," and described to him the doom of his house, because his sons had made themselves vile, and he had not restrained them. David the king might have been moved to anger against Nathan for that personal parable and pungent application; but his anger was stayed, nay, better still, his heart was broken, because the prophet could say, "Thus saith the Lord." My dear brethren in Christ, you and I have often risen in anger at the intrusive proofs of ignorant men; but I hope we have far more often felt the melting power of a "Thus saith the Lord." When the heart is right, the word of God sweetly melts us, as the breath of the south wind melts the frozen rivers.

4. "Thus saith the Lord" *is the only solid ground of comfort to God's people.* Where can a child of God find true solace

apart from that which cometh out of the mouth of the Most High! Truly, "Man doth not live by bread alone; but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live;" "Thy words were found, and I did eat them;" "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" When Nathan came to tell David of the covenant which the Lord would make with him and his house, David would scarcely have believed so great a mercy to be really his if the prophet had not began with "Thus saith the Lord." It was not "Thus saith Nathan," or "Thus do the ancients say," but "Thus saith *the Lord;*" and David's heart was full of holy joy when he saw the covenant to be ordered in all things and sure. When Hezekiah lay sick unto death, he turned his face to the wall and prayed; but there was no comfort to the royal suppliant until the prophet came with "Thus saith the Lord;" and when Sennacherib was about to besiege Jerusalem, and Lachish had fallen, Hezekiah prayed, and the people with him; but oh! they could not think it possible that there should be a hook put into the jaw of the mighty Assyrian, and that he should be turned back by the way in which he came, till the prophet reassured their hearts with a "Thus saith the Lord." Zion's sons and daughters feast upon the sure word of their faithful God. Brethren, I need not enlarge here, for I hope most of you know the preciousness of a divine promise. There is nothing wanted to stay your soul in your worst troubles but the Word of God applied with power. God may not send you a friend; he may not raise up a deliverer; but if he shall only give you to believe his Word, that shall be enough for you. Martin Luther said: "I have covenanted with my Lord that he should not send me visions, or dreams, or even angels. I am content with this one gift of the Scriptures, which abundantly teaches and supplies all that is necessary, both for this life and that which is to come." O Lord, only feed me on thy Word, and I will not envy kings their delicacies, nor even the angels around thy throne the bread of heaven on which they live.

5. Yet again: "Thus saith the Lord" is that *with which we*

must confront the Lord's enemies. When Moses went in before Pharaoh, the words which he used were not, "The elders of Israel have consulted, and thus have they bidden me say," not "Our Father Abraham once said, and his words have been handed to us by long tradition" — such talk would have been readily resisted; but he confronted the haughty monarch with "Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go;" and it was the power of this divine word which rained plagues upon the fields of Zoan, and brought forth the captives, with silver and gold. Pharaoh might boast, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" but ere long he knew that Jehovah's word was mightier than all the horsemen and chariots of Mizraim, and was not to be resisted without terrible defeat. To this day, if we would break sinners' hearts, our hammer must be "Thus saith the Lord;" and if we would woo them to obedience to King Jesus, our reasons must come from his own Word. I have often noticed in conversion, that, though sometimes a particular passage of the sermon may be quoted by the converted person as the means of enlightenment, yet in the majority of cases it is the text, or some passage of Scripture, quoted during the sermon, which is blessed to do the work. McCheyne says, "Depend upon it, it is God's Word, not our comment upon God's Word, that saves souls;" and so it is. Let us use much of Scripture, much of the pure silver of sacred revelation, and no human alloy. "What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord?"

6. To close this point: Such an authority has a "Thus saith the Lord," that *it is not to be despised without entailing upon the offender the severest penalty.* Samuel came to Saul with "Thus saith the Lord," and bade him destroy the Amalekites. He was utterly to cut them off, and not to spare so much as one of them. But Saul saved the best of the cattle and the sheep, and brought home Agag; and what was the result? His kingdom was taken from him and given to a neighbor of his that was better than he; and because he exalted himself beyond measure to do otherwise than according to the letter of God's command, he was put away forever from having dominion over Israel. And mark this word:

if any church in Christendom shall continue, after light is given and after plain rebuke is uttered, to walk contrary to the word of God, and to teach that which is inconsistent with Holy Scripture, as Saul was put away from the kingdom, so shall that church be put away from before the Lord of Hosts; and if any man, be he who he may, after receiving light from on high, continues wilfully to shut his eyes, he shall not, if an heir of heaven, be rejected from eternal salvation, but he shall be cast off from much of the usefulness and comfort which he might otherwise have enjoyed. He knew his Master's will, and did it not: he shall be beaten with many stripes. He has been as the horse or the mule which have no understanding, and his mouth shall be held in with bit and bridle. Many sorrows shall be to those who dare to dash themselves against the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler by opposing his "Thus saith the Lord." Upon whomsoever this stone shall fall, it shall grind him to powder; and whosoever shall fall upon it shall be broken, to his own lasting damage. O my brethren! I would that we trembled and stood more in awe of God's word. I fear me that many treat the things of God as though they were merely matters of opinion, but remember that opinion cannot govern in God's house. God's word, not man's opinion, claims your allegiance. Remember that although our ignorant conscience may not accuse us of error, yet if we walk contrary to God's word, our conscientiousness does not screen us from sin; for conscience is not the sovereign arbiter of right and wrong, but the plain word of God is the rule of equity. I do not sin so foully as if I sinned against my conscience, but I still sin, if, having an unenlightened conscience, I ignorantly transgress. But if I wilfully keep my conscience in darkness, and continue in errors which I might easily know to be such by a little thought and searching of God's word, then my conscience can offer me no excuse, for I am guilty of blindfolding the guide which I have chosen, and then, knowing him to be blindfolded, I am guilty of the folly of letting him lead me into rebellion against God. O church of God! hear thou the voice of thy great Founder and Lord: "Whosoever, therefore

shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." Oh for a stern integrity, that will hold the word, and will never depart from it, come what may. This much concerning the value of a "Thus saith the Lord."

II. Dear friends, the second part of our subject may be very displeasing to some who have strayed in here, but that I cannot help. I do not remember ever asking any one to come and hear me, and therefore, as you come of your own wills, when I have any truth to speak, I shall not conceal it because you choose to be present. At the present crisis, I feel that it is woe unto me if I do not lift up my voice like a trumpet, and urge with all my might the necessity of reformation in our State Church. I have, moreover, an excellent excuse for the inquiry I am about to make; for as I am publicly charged with ignorance, it is at once my duty and my privilege to seek instruction of those who claim authority to teach. When one is known to be profoundly ignorant, and there are certain fathers in the faith who have the power to instruct, the least thing that can be allowed us is to ask questions, and the smallest boon we can expect is to have them answered by men expressly ordained to instruct the ignorant.

The Rev. W. Goode, the Dean of Ripon, appears to be much better acquainted with the extent of my reading and mental acquirements than I am myself. He speaks with all the positiveness of a personal acquaintance concerning my reputed ignorance, and for my own part I am not at all anxious to question so very reverend an authority. He writes: "As to that young minister who is now raving against the Evangelical clergy on this point, it is to be regretted that so much notice has been taken of his railings. He is to be pitied, because his entire want of acquaintance with theological literature leaves him utterly unfit for the

determination of such a question; which is a question, not of mere doctrine, but of what may be called historical theology; and his charges are just a parallel to those which the Romanists would bring against himself as well as others for the interpretation of the words, 'This is my body.' But were he a wiser man than he is, he would know better what his qualifications are for passing judgment on such a point, and be willing to learn from such facts, among others, as the Gorham Judgment and the cases of Mr. Maskell and Mr. Mozley, what ground there is for his charges against the Evangelical clergy. Let him hold and enforce his own view of doctrine as he pleases; but when he undertakes to determine what is the exclusive meaning of the Book of Common Prayer, and brings a charge of dishonesty against those who take a different view of that meaning from what he does, he only shows the presumptuous self-confidence with which he is prepared to pronounce judgment upon matters of which he is profoundly ignorant. To hold a controversy with him upon the subject would be to as little purpose as to attempt to hold a logically-constructed argument with a child unacquainted with logical terms."

When this paragraph caught my eye, my heart leaped with joy, for I knew that the sinners in Zion were afraid; and I thought I heard a voice crying from the Word, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." My mind flew back to the valley of Elah, and I remembered the words of the old record: "And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him; for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance. And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. And the Philistine said to

David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field." My spirit kindled at these words of the boastful champion of yore, and at their modern reproduction by the vainglorious divine of Ripon, and the answer of David was in my heart as it is even now upon my tongue: "Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand . . . . . that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands." Admitting the witness of the venerable dean to be correct, and that "the young minister" is inexpert in logic, I am not therefore ashamed; far otherwise, I will the rather glory in mine infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me; "for when I am weak, then am I strong." Take, O ye great ones of the earth, every profit that can be made out of your belief in my utter total ignorance, and your own profound and extensive learning, and then go your ways, and learn what this meaneth: "Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me. Therefore shall evil come upon thee: thou shalt not know from whence it riseth." And now at this hour, having been condemned as intolerably ignorant, I feel I have the liberty to ask just a few explanations of those reverend divines who do know or ought to know the grounds of their faith and practice.

1. I open this little book, — the Prayer-Book, of whose occasional services the more I know the less I approve, — and I find in the *Baptismal Service*, that when little children are brought to be sprinkled, certain godfathers and godmothers promise for them that they shall renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, etc., and that they shall obediently keep all God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their life. To me it seems that they might as well promise that

the infants should grow up with Roman noses, auburn hair, and blue eyes; for they are just as able to make them do the one as the other. I shall not however intrude my opinion further, but simply ask whether there is a "Thus saith the Lord" for any man's standing proxy for a babe, and making such promises in its name? — in other words, I ask for apostolical, prophetic, or any other form of scriptural precept, or precedent, for the use of proxies in baptism. True religion is a personal matter — is its first manifestation in regeneration to be connected with the impossible promises of others? Plain proof-texts are requested for godfathers and godmothers; and such important persons deserve to be defended by the clergy, if texts of Scripture can be discovered. As I cannot imagine where the texts will be found, I must pause till the learned shall produce them. Further, I find that these children enter into a covenant by proxy, of which we are assured that *the promise* our Lord Jesus will for *his* part most surely keep and perform; but the children are bound to do *their* part — that part being something more than the gigantic task of keeping all the commandments of God. Now I ask for a "Thus saith the Lord" for such a covenant as this. I find two covenants in the Word of God: one is the covenant of works, "This do, and thou shalt live;" I find another, the covenant of grace, which runs only in this wise, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." I find it expressly declared that there cannot be a mixture of works and grace; for, says Paul, "If by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work;" and I ask a "Thus saith the Lord" for this baptismal covenant, which is nominally of grace, but really of works, or at best an unnatural conglomerate of grace and works. I ask those who have searched Scripture through, to find me the form or the command for any baptismal covenant whatever. It is idle to say that such a covenant was allowed among the early Christians; their witness is not early enough for us: we want a "Thus saith the Lord," and nothing but this will justify this pretended covenant.

We then find that after this covenant has been made, and the water has been applied in a manner which we think needs also a "Thus saith the Lord" to justify it, it is publicly declared that the babe is regenerated, — "Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is regenerated and grafted into the body of Christ's church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for these benefits, and with one accord make our prayers unto him, that this child may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning." And, again, "We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy church," etc. We are told we do not understand the meaning of "regeneration" as it is used in the services of the Anglican Church. The meaning of this passage is historical, hypothetical, ecclesiastical, and we know not what. The words "to be born again" did not formerly seem to us to be so very difficult to understand, nor do they appear so now as they stand in Scripture; for we find in them the one regeneration which has renewed us in the spirit of our mind, and we cannot consent to use those words in any other sense. Well, whether regeneration be or be not a very equivocal word, we simply ask, Is there a "Thus saith the Lord" for the assertion that a sprinkled infant is therefore regenerate in any sense in the world? Will any person find us a text of Scripture? — he shall have large rewards from clergymen with uneasy consciences! We put our inquiry again in plain terms, Will some one oblige us with a plain "Thus saith the Lord" proving that water baptism in any one instance makes an unconscious babe a member of Christ and a child of God, in any sense which any sane person chooses to attach to those words? Where is the passage — where? Echo answers "where?" But this subject you have been considering for some time, and are well convinced that the process of regenerating babies by occult influences conveyed by water is a pure — no, an impure — invention of priestcraft. There is therefore no necessity that I enlarge upon a point so well understood.

2. I have a second question to ask. There is prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer a peculiar ceremony called *confirmation.* I do not remember to have read of that in Scripture. I would like to have a "Thus saith the Lord" for that rite. As I am ready to yield as far as possible, suppose we take it for granted that this ceremony is defensible from Holy Writ, I would like to know whether there is any "Thus saith the Lord" allowing a person called a bishop to give to the assembled youths an assurance of divine favor by laying his hands on their heads? The bishop having laid his hands on every head presented to him, whether it be gracious or graceless, talks thus in the Collect, "Almighty and everliving God, who makest us both to will and to do those things that be good and acceptable unto thy divine majesty, we make our humble supplications unto thee for *these thy servants upon whom* (*after the example of thy holy apostles*) *we have now laid our hands, to certify them* (*by this sign*) *of thy favor and gracious goodness towards them.*" Does this mean that the bishop's hand certifies the person touched thereby of special divine favor? So it seems to teach, as far as I can see. We want, then, a "Thus saith the Lord," authorizing this individual in lawn to exercise the office of an apostle! We then desire scriptural warrant permitting him to certify these kneeling youths of the enjoyment or possession of any particular divine favor by putting his hands on their heads. If this means the common goodness of God, the bishop's hands are not needed to certify them of that; but as he has already declared in prayer that they were regenerated by water and the Spirit, and had been forgiven all their sins, it is clear that special favor is intended; we inquire, therefore, for his authority for giving these young people a further certificate of special divine favor by the imposition of his hands. Why *his* hands? Who is he that he can certify these persons of God's favor more than any other man? Where is his scriptural warrant to confer by his hands a certificate of grace upon young people who in innumerable cases are thoughtless and unconverted, if not profane? We want a "Thus saith the Lord" for the whole thing, and then for each

item in detail. Endless is the task thus proposed to the honest Churchman.

3. Another matter needs a little clearing up; and, as this Book was set forth by learned divines and bishops, I would like a lucid explanation. The priest visits a sick man, sits down by his bedside, reads certain prayers, bids the patient remember his baptism, questions him as to his creed, gives him good advice about forgiving his enemies and making his will, moves him to make a special confession of his sin if he feels his conscience troubled with any weighty matter, after which confession the Rubric says, "the priest shall absolve him" (if he humbly and heartily desire it), after this sort. Here is the absolution, and I humbly and heartily desire a "Thus saith the Lord" for it: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences; and *by his authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*" Sir Priest, I want you to give me a plain warrant from God's Word for your absolving my dying neighbor at this rate. Who are you that you should use such words? The season is solemn: it is the hour of death, and the matter is weighty, for it concerns the eternal interests of the dying man, and may — nay, will, if you be found to be acting presumptuously in this matter — involve your own soul in eternal ruin. Whence did you derive your right to forgive that sick man? Might he not raise his withered hands and return the compliment by absolving you? Are you quite sure as to the committal of divine authority to you? Then show me the deed of gift, and let it be clearly of divine origin. The apostles were empowered to do many things; but who are you? Do you claim to be their successors? Then work miracles similar to theirs; take up serpents, and drink deadly things without being harmed thereby; prove to us that you have seen the Lord, or even that cloven tongues of fire have sat upon each of you. You evangelical clergy, dare you claim to be successors of the apostles, and to have power to forgive sins? Your Puseyite brethren go

the whole length of superstitious pretension; but you have too much light to be so superstitious; and yet you do what is quite as wicked, — you solemnly subscribe that this absolution is not contrary to the Word of God when you know it is? Gorham case, say you. I care nothing for your Gorham case: I want a "Thus saith the Lord" warranting you to swear to what you know to be false and dangerous. Mr. Mozley and Mr. Maskell may give you all the comfort which they can afford; but one word of Peter or of Paul would be of more weight in this matter than a thousand words from either of them.

You are aware, perhaps, that it is not every man who is permitted by the Established religion to pronounce this absolution. A person called a "deacon" is, I am informed, allowed to preach and do a great many things, but when he reads the Book of Common Prayer in the daily service he must not grant absolution; there is a supernatural something which the man has not yet received, for he has only once felt the episcopal imposition of hands. We shall see, by-and-by, where absolving power comes from. The deacon has attained to one grade of priestcraft, but the full vigor of mystic influence rests not upon him. Another touch, another subscription, and the keys of St. Peter will swing at his girdle; but his time is not yet. I ask him, whether he calls himself a deacon or a priest, where he gets a "Thus saith the Lord" for this absolution? which, if it be not of God, is a piece of impertinence, superstition, blasphemy, and falsehood.

4. I turn on and find that when the sick dies he is buried in consecrated ground; and though he may have cut his throat while under *delirium tremens*, if the jury do not return a verdict of suicide, the priest shall say, as he casts earth upon the body, "Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother here departed, we therefore commit his body to the ground, — earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, — in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life." And again, "We give thee hearty thanks for that it hath pleased thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world." And yet again, "We

meekly beseech thee, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness; that when we shall depart this life, we may rest in him, as our hope is this our brother doth." We beg a "Thus saith the Lord" for burying every baptized thief, harlot, rogue, drunkard, and liar who may die in the parish — "in sure and certain hope of the blessed resurrection." "Oh! it is commanded by authority." What authority? We challenge it, and permit none to pass muster but a "Thus saith the Lord." Until clergymen will bring us scriptural warrant for uttering falsehoods over a grave, we dare not cease our testimony against them. How long will the many godly laymen in that Church remain quiet? Why do they not bestir themselves, and demand revision or disruption?

5. Turning a little further on, into a part of the Prayer-Book not much frequented by ordinary readers, we come to the "*Ordering of Priests*," or the way in which priests are made. Why *priests?* Is one believer more a priest than another, when all are styled a royal priesthood? Let that pass. Of course, brethren, the priests are made by the bishops, as the bishops are made by Lord Palmerston, or Lord Derby, or any other political leader who may be in office. The Prime Minister of England is the true fountain from whom all bishops flow, and the priests are minor emanations branching off from the mitre rather than the crown. Here is the way of ordering priests. Let heaven and earth hear this and be astonished: "When this prayer is done, the bishop with the priests present shall lay their hands severally upon the head of every one that receiveth the order of priesthood; the receivers humbly kneeling upon their knees, and the bishop saying, 'Receive the Holy Ghost.'" Listen to it, now! Think you behold the scene: a man of God, a bishop whom you have been in the habit of considering a most gracious, godly man, and such no doubt he may be, in a sort, — think you see him putting his hands upon the head of some evangelical man whom you will go and hear, or, if you like, upon some young rake fresh from Oxford, — and think you hear him say, "*Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the church*

of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven, and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained." We want a "Thus saith the Lord" for that; for that is putting it rather strongly in the popish line, one would think. Is the way of ordering priests in the Church of Rome much worse than this? That the apostles did confer the Holy Ghost, we never thought of denying; but that Oxford, Exeter, or any other occupants of the bench can give the Holy Spirit, needs some proof other than their silk aprons or lawn sleeves can afford us. We ask, moreover, for one instance in which an apostle conferred upon any minister the power to forgive sins, and where it can be found in Scripture that any man other than an apostle ever received authority to absolve sinners. Sirs, let us say the truth; however much yonder priest may pretend at his parishioner's bedside to forgive sin, the man's sins are not forgiven; and the troubled conscience of the sinner often bears witness to the fact, as the day of judgment and the fearful hell of sinners must also bear witness. And what think you, sirs, must be the curse that fills the mouth of damned souls, when in another world they meet the priest who absolved them with this sham absolution! With what reproaches will such deceived ones meet the priest who sent them down to perdition with a lie in their right hands! Will they not say to him, "Thou didst forgive me all my sins by an authority committed unto thee, and yet here am I cast into the pit of hell?" Oh! if I do not clear my soul upon this infamous business, and if the whole Christian church does not cleanse herself of it, what guilt will lay upon us! This is become a crying evil, and a sin that is not to be spoken of behind the door, nor to be handled in gentle language. I have been severe, it is said, and spoken harshly. I do not believe it possible to be too severe in this matter; but, sirs, if I have been so, let that be set down as my sin if you will; but is there any comparison between my fault and that of men who know this to be contrary to the Word of God, and yet give it their unfeigned assent and consent? or the sin of those who can lie unto the Holy Ghost, by pretending to confer Him who

bloweth where he listeth upon men who as likely as not are as graceless as the very heathen? Fresh from the dissipations of college-life, the sinner bows before the man in lawn, and rises a full-blown priest, fully able to remit or retain sins. After this, how can the priests of the Church of England denounce the Roman Catholics? It is so very easy to fume and bluster against Puseyites and Papists; but the moment our charity begins at home, and we give our Evangelical brethren the same benefit which they confer upon the open Romanists, they are incensed beyond measure. Yet will we tell them to their faces, that they, despite their fair speeches, are as guilty as those whom they denounce; for there is as much Popery in this priest-making as in any passage in the mass-book. Protestant England! wilt thou long tolerate this blasphemy? Land of Wiclif, birthplace of the martyrs of Smithfield, is this long to be borne with? I am clear of this matter before the Most High, or hope to be, ere I sleep in the grave; and having once sounded the trumpet, it shall ring till my lips are dumb. Do you tell me it is no business of mine? Is it not the *National* Church? — does not its sin rest, therefore, upon every man and woman in the nation, Dissenter and Churchman, who does not shake himself from it by open disavowal? I am not meddling with anybody else's church; but the church that claims me as a parishioner would compel me, if it could, to pay its church rates, and that does take from me my share of tithe every year. I ask the sturdy Protestants of England, and especially the laity of the Church of England, whether they intend forever to foster such abominations? Arise, Britannia! nation of the free, and shake thy garments from the dust of this hoary superstition; and as for thee, O Church of England! may God bless thee with ministers who will sooner come forth to poverty and shame than pervert or assist in perverting the Word of God.

6. I have not quite done: I have another question to ask. Look at the thanksgiving which is offered on the twentieth day of June, on account of Her Majesty's accession: in this thanksgiving we very heartily join, although we decline to pray by book

on the twentieth of June or any other day; look at the close of that thanksgiving, and you see the name of Lord John Russell as a sort of official authority for the prayer! Is Earl Russell also among the prophets? And on the other side of the page, in order that the Tories may edify the church as well as the Whigs, I see the hand of S. H. Walpole. Is he also a governor in Christ's church? Hath the Lord given these men power to legislate for his church, or sign mandates for her to obey? But what is it all about? "*Victoria Regina, our will and pleasure is that these four forms of prayer,*" etc. Do you see? here is royal supremacy! Further on, in the next page: "*Now, therefore, our will and pleasure* is," etc. See the Preface to the Articles, "*Being by God's Ordinance, according to our just Title, Defender of the Faith, and Supreme Governor of the Church, within these our Dominions;*" and again, "*We are Supreme Governor of the Church of England.*" This is the way in which your Church bows herself before the kingdoms of this world. I demand, earnestly demand, a "Thus saith the Lord" for this royal supremacy. If any king, or queen, or emperor shall say, in any Christian church, "Our will and pleasure is," we reply, "We have another King, — one Jesus." As to the Queen, honored and beloved as she is, she is by her sex incapacitated for ruling in the church. Paul decides that point by his plain precept, "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence;" and if a king were in the case, we should say, "We render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's." In civil matters, we cheerfully obey princes and magistrates; but if any king, queen, emperor, or what not, usurps power in the church of God, we reply, "One is our Master, even Christ, and all we are brethren. The crown-rights belong to King Jesus: he alone is King in Zion." But I am met at once with the reply, "Well, but Christ is the Head of the Established Church, as well as the Queen." I remember reading about a three-headed dog which kept the gates of hell, but I never dreamed of a two-headed church till I heard of the Anglican Etsablishment. A

two-headed church is a monster! The Queen the Head of the Church, and King Jesus the Head of the Church, too! Never. Where is a "Thus saith the Lord" for this? No man living who calls himself an Englishman has a word to say of Her Majesty except that which is full of honor and esteem and loyal affection; but the moment we come to talk about the church of Christ, whoever shall say, or think, or believe, that there is any headship to the church of Christ except the person of Christ himself, he knoweth not what he saith nor whereof he affirmeth. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Head *over all things* to his church, which is his body: the fulness of him filleth all in all. Here stand the two letters "V. R." at the top of certain mandates, and they mean just this: "Our royal authority commands that you shall not believe this, and you shall believe that; you shall not pray this, and you shall pray that; and you shall pray on such a day," and so on. The church which thus bows to authority commits fornication with the kings of the earth, and virtually renounces her allegiance to Christ to gain the filthy lucre of state endowments. He is the freeman whom the truth makes free, and who wears no gilded collar, with a chain hanging therefrom held in a royal hand. Remember how the Chancellor laughed to scorn the whole bench of bishops, and rightly so; for he who voluntarily makes himself a bondman deserves to feel the lash. May the little finger of our state grow heavier than the loins of James or Elizabeth, until all good men flee from the house of bondage. Servants of God, will ye be servants of man? Ye who profess to follow King Jesus and see him crowned with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, do you take off his diadem to put it upon the head of another? No, it shall never be. Scotland has repelled the royal intrusion right bravely by her sons of the Free Church, who have left all to follow King Jesus. Her bush burned in the olden times, but was not consumed; the covenant was stained with blood, but it was never slain. Let us revive that covenant, and, if need be, seal it with our blood. Let the Church of England have what king she pleases, or what prince she pleases for her

head; but this I know, that there is no "Thus saith the Lord" concerning the ecclesiastical supremacy of Victoria Regina, nor the authority of Lord John Russell, or S. H. Walpole, or any of that company, honorable though they be.

7. Now once more: one other question. I am profoundly ignorant, and have not the power to judge of these things (so am I informed), and therefore I would like to ask for a "Thus saith the Lord" for a few of the canons; — no, perhaps I had better not read them; they are too bad, — they are full of all malice and uncharitableness, and everything that cometh of the foul fiend. I will ask whether there can be found any "Thus saith the Lord" for this: Canon 10. "*Maintainers of Schismatics in the Church of England to be censured.* Whoever shall hereafter affirm that such ministers as refuse to subscribe to the form and manner of God's worship in the Church of England, prescribed in the Communion-Book, and their adherents, may truly take unto them the name of another church not established by law, and dare presume to publish it, that this their pretended church hath of long time groaned under the burden of certain grievances imposed upon it, and upon the members thereof before mentioned, by the Church of England, and the orders and constitutions therein by law established, let them be excommunicated, and not restored until they repent and publicly revoke such their wicked errors." What Scripture warrants one church to excommunicate another merely for being a church, and complaining of undoubted grievances?

Canon 11. "*Maintainers of Conventicles censured.* Whosoever shall hereafter affirm or maintain that there are within this realm other meetings, assemblies, or congregations of the king's born subjects, than such as by the laws of this land are held and allowed, which may rightly challenge to themselves the name of true and lawful churches, let him be excommunicated, and not restored but by the Archbishop, after his repentance and public revocation of such his wicked errors." Where doth Holy Scripture authorize the excommunication of every good man who is charitable enough to believe that there are other churches beside his own? Search ye out of the Book of the Lord, and read!

For very much in this Book of Canons I beg to be informed of a "Thus saith the Lord." For matters which do not concern religion and have only to do with the mere arrangement of service, we neither ask nor expect a divine precept; but upon vital points of doctrine, ceremony, or precept, we cannot do without it. Scarcely can any document be more inconsistent with Scripture than the Book of Canons, and hence it is ever kept in the background, because those who know anything about it must be ashamed of it. And yet these are Canons of the Church of England, — canons which are inconsistent, many of them, with even the common rules of our own present enlightened law, let alone the Word of God. We ask a "Thus saith the Lord" for them, and we wait until a "Thus saith the Lord" shall be found to defend them.

Now some will say, why do I thus take this matter up and look into it? I have already told you the reason, dear friends. There is an opportunity for pushing another Reformation given to us just now, of which if we do not avail ourselves we shall be very guilty. Some have said, "Why not go on preaching the gospel to sinners?" I do preach the gospel to sinners, as earnestly as ever I did in my life; and there are as many conversions to God as at any former period. This is God's work: and beware lest any of you lift a finger against it. The hand of the Lord is in this thing, and he that lives shall see it. Let us have our prayers, that good may come of this controversy, even though you may deplore it. As for anything else that you can do, it shall not turn us a hair's-breadth from this testimony to which we feel God has called us, though it bringeth upon us every evil that flesh would shrink from. The words of Dr. Guthrie are well worth quoting here: "The servant is no better than his master; and I do believe, were we more true to God, more faithful and honest in opposing the world for its good, we should get less smoothly along the path of life, and have less reason to read with apprehension these words of Jesus: 'Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you.' Not less true than shrewd was the remark of a Scotch woman respecting one who, just settled in

the ministry, had been borne to his pulpit amid the plaudits of all the people: 'If he is a faithful servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, he will have all the blackguards in the parish on his head before a month is gone.'"

III. Now, to close, let me say to you, my hearers, have any of you a hope of heaven which will not stand the test of "Thus saith the Lord?" What are you resting upon? Are you resting upon something which you felt when excited at a prayer-meeting or under a sermon? Remember you will not have that excitement to bear you up in death, and the religion of excitement will not suffice in the day of judgment. Are you building upon your own works? Are you depending upon your own feelings? Do you rely upon sacraments? Are you placing your trust upon the word of man? If so, remember that when God shakes all things he will shake these false foundations; but oh! build upon the Word of my Lord and Master; trust your soul with Jesus. Hating sin, and clinging to the great sin-bearer, you shall find in him a rock of refuge which can never, never fail you; but I do conjure you, as the Lord liveth, search and try yourselves by the Word of God. No doubt there are many among us who are not built upon the Rock of Ages, and we may any of us be deceived by a mere name to live. Do, then, since the test-day must come,—since you must be weighed in the balances,—weigh yourselves now, my hearers; and let none of us go down to the chambers of destruction believing ourselves to be heirs of heaven, being all the while enemies to the Most High God. May the Lord exalt his own Word, and give us a sure inheritance in the blessings which it brings. Amen.

SERMON IV.

A HEARER IN DISGUISE.

"AND IT WAS SO, WHEN AHIJAH HEARD THE SOUND OF HER FEET, AS SHE CAME IN AT THE DOOR, THAT HE SAID, COME IN, THOU WIFE OF JEROBOAM; WHY FEIGNEST THOU THYSELF TO BE ANOTHER? FOR I AM SENT TO THEE WITH HEAVY TIDINGS."—1 Kings xiv. 6.

AHIJAH the prophet was blind. Did I not tell you this morning that God's servants could be happy without the light of the sun? If God should be pleased to deprive their natural eyes of the pleasures of light, their souls would not be without joy; for, as in the New Jerusalem, so in the renewed heart, "the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Doubtless this was the case with that venerable prophet. He was not like Moses, whose eye did not wax dim, and whose natural strength did not abate; but his eyes were set with age; the organs of vision had so decayed through the multitude of his years, that he could not see so much as a ray of light. Yet doubtless when he could not look out of the windows, God looked in; and when there was no beam coming in from the sun, much light was darted in from heaven. What man of modern times saw more than blind Milton? It were well for us to feel the influence of that "drop serene," and close our eyes forever, if we could but see such visions of God as Milton has penned in his Paradise Lost, and Paradise Regained. Here is a fine picture for you. Behold the venerable prophet sitting alone in his humble cottage; and yet not alone, because his God is with him. Blind, but yet in the highest sense a seer, looking into the invis-

ible, and by faith beholding things which we blind men who have our sight can never see; beholding what eye hath not seen, and hearing what ear hath never heard. This, then, may furnish a word of comfort at the outset to any who are suffering under infirmity: Jesus can recompense you. You are not the only persons who have been called so to suffer: full many of your humble guild — the company of the blind — have been gifted with spiritual sight. If you have lost hearing, or the use of any of the members of your body, remember that no strange thing has happened to you, but such as is common to man. There is a way by which, in proportion as your tribulations abound, so your consolations may abound through Jesus Christ. Nay, these very privations which you feel so sadly, which so loudly demand our sympathy, may by God's love be transmuted into mercies, by a holy alchemy which really turns iron into gold. He can turn your losses into gains, and your curses into blessings.

Mark well this venerable prophet — a man so old as to have survived the senses which give life its charm: is it not time for him to die? Has he not outlived his usefulness when he is made entirely dependent upon his fellow-creatures, and a burden to himself? Why does not the prophet's Master send a convoy of angels to take the good man home? There he sits, without any apparent perception of the scenes transpiring around him; surely, surely it is time for the Master to call him away! But no, he does not. Ahijah must not die; he has another message to deliver, and he is immortal till his work is done. I have no doubt he sweetly slept after he had delivered his last message, but not till then. Brethren and sisters, you and I have no right to want to go to heaven till our work is done. There is a desire to be with Christ which is not only natural but spiritual; there is a sighing to behold his face, which, if a man be without, I shall question if he be a Christian at all; but to wish to be away from the battle before we win the victory, and to desire to leave the field before the day is over, were but lazy and listless; therefore let us pray God to save us from it. Whitefield and a company of ministers were talking together and expressing their desire to go to heaven.

Good Mr. Tennant was the only man who differed from them. He said he did not wish to die; and he thought that if his brother Whitefield would but consider for a time, he would not wish to be gone either; for, he said, if you hire a man to do a day's work, and he is saying all the day, "I wish it were evening; I wish it were time to go home," you would think, "What a lazy fellow he is;" and you would wish you had never engaged him. "So," he said, "I am afraid it is nothing but our idleness that often prompts us to desire to be away from our work." If there be a soul to win, let me stop until I have won it. Truly, some of us might summon up courage enough to say, "I would fain barter heaven for the glory of Christ, and not only wait twenty years out of heaven if I may have twenty years of glorifying him the better, but wait out altogether if I may outside heaven sing to him sweeter songs, and honor him more than I can inside its walls; for outside heaven shall be heaven to me if it shall help me to glorify my Lord and Master the better." You have heard, I dare say, that anecdote of good Mr. Whitefield, in his early ministry, lying down, as he thought, to die, in a high fever, and a poor negro woman sitting by his side and tending him. In his sad moments, Whitefield thought of dying; but the black woman said, "No, Master Whitefield, you are not to die yet: there are thousands of souls to bring to Christ: so keep up your spirits, for you must live, and not die; your Master has yet a work for you to do." All this comes to my mind as I think of that venerable old prophet, sitting in his chair, waiting until he shall have spoken to Jeroboam's wife; and then after that ascending to his Father and his God — but not until his work was done.

We have introduced to you Ahijah, the venerable prophet. We must now address you upon an incident connected with his closing ministry.

In our text we have before us *an occasional hearer;* secondly we observe *a useless disguise;* and thirdly, we *listen to heavy tidings.*

I. We have before us, first of all, THE OCCASIONAL HEARER

Jeroboam and his wife did not often go to hear Ahijah. They were not people who went to worship Jehovah; they neither feared God nor regarded his prophet. There may be some such here to-night. You do not often come to a place of worship. I am glad you are hear now. It may be my Master has sent me with tidings for you. Give earnest heed, I pray you, that the tidings may be received and blessed. I am sometimes tired of preaching to those who hear me every Sunday, for I fear some of them never will be saved. They get hardened by the gospel; all the blows of the hammer have only tended to weld their hearts to their sins, and make them harder, instead of melting them. May God grant, however, that my fears may be removed, and that some who have long resisted the wooings of the gospel may yet yield. I have more hope of you, occasional hearers; I know that when my Master has helped me to cast the net on the right side of the ship, I have taken some of you. There are amongst those numbered with us some of the best in the church, and the most useful men in our society, who were brought in by dropping into the place just as stray hearers — passing by, perhaps, or coming out of curiosity; but God knew who they were, knew how to adapt the sermon to the case, and affect the heart with the Word. Now, here was an occasional hearer; and we make the observation that *this occasional hearer was totally destitute of all true piety.* Most occasional hearers are. Those who have true religion are not occasional hearers. You will find that truly gracious persons are diligent in the use of the means. Instead of thinking it a toil to come up to the place of worship, I know there are some of you who wish there were two Sundays in the week; and the happiest times you ever have are when you are sitting in these seats and joining in our sacred songs.

"Thine earthly Sabbaths, Lord, we love."

There is no verse which gives *you* a better idea of heaven as a place than that —

"Where congregations ne'er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end."

Gracious souls love the place where God's honor dwelleth, and the assembling of themselves together is always a blessed thing to them; but occasional hearers are generally graceless persons. I know how you spend your Sunday. There is the morning: you are not up very early; it takes a long time to dress on a Sunday morning; then follows the Sunday paper, with the news of the week, — *that* must be gone through. The wife has been toiling hard all the morning with the dinner; what do you care? Then there is the afternoon, when there is a little more lolling about. Then in the evening, there is the walk. But the day, after all, is not very happy and comfortable; and sometimes you have wished there were no Sundays, except that they give your body a little rest. You do not fear God, nor do you care for his service. Nevertheless I am glad you have come here to-night; for — who can tell? — my Lord, who found out Jeroboam's wife, can find you out; and though it is many a day since you darkened the walls of God's sanctuary, this shall be the beginning of many such days to you; and — who can tell? — this may be your new birth night, when you shall turn over a new leaf; nay, not turn over a new leaf, but get a new book altogether, and find your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

The second remark about these occasional hearers is, that when they do come, *they very generally come because they are in trouble.* When Jeroboam's wife came and spoke to the prophet, it was because the dear child was ill at home. I know some occasional hearers who go to a place of worship as people go to a chemist's shop; that is, when they want something, because they do not feel quite right. Yes, your child is very sick. You have been watching all day, and you have thought, "I cannot stand it any longer: I will just walk out and go to a place of worship to-night; I want something to cheer me." You have had such trials lately that your wife said to you, "John, we must not keep on in this way any longer. It is clear all we do ends without any prosperity. We put our money into a bag which is full of holes. We spend it for that which is not bread. We labor for that which doth not profit." So you have come here

to see if the Lord may have a word of comfort through his servant who speaks to you. I can only say you are very welcome to come in, thou wife of Jeroboam. We are as glad to see you as though you always came; and we do hope that this sorrowful affliction may be overruled by God for your lasting good. There are persons who profess to be atheists; but their atheism is not very deep. Addison tells us of a man who, on board ship in a storm, knelt down to pray, and expressed his firm belief in a God. When he got ashore some one laughed at him for it, and he challenged the man to a duel. They fought together, and the atheist fell wounded. When the blood was flowing he believed there was a God, and he began to cry to God with all his might to save him. The physician bound up the wound. The man put the question to him, "Is it mortal?" "No," he says; "it is only a flesh wound." Then said the man, "There is no God; I am a thorough atheist." He believed in God when he thought he was going to die; the moment he felt himself better, he returned to his unbelief. A pretty religion that to live in, and a pretty religion to die with! Your absence from God's house will do very well when things go well with you; you can go out with a young wife to dissipate in frivolity hours which should be sacred to worship; but when sickness shall come, — when affliction shall fall heavily upon you, — when you have trial after trial, and you yourself begin to get gray with many cares, and feeble and helpless with many years; and death comes near and casts his pale shadow across your cheek; and strange thoughts, oblivious of all around, come over you by day; and singular dreams, which throw you into the company of the long since dead, surprise you by night; and fears and frights, and signs and calls, and bodings of imagination, prove the wanderings and weakness of your brain, — then, but possibly not till then, you think of going to the house of God. I am glad, therefore, if this trouble has visited you early, or ever "the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened;" and I am very glad that you have come to

the house of God. Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; for I bear thee tidings from the God of heaven to-night.

There is a third point, — *this woman would not have come but that her husband sent her, on the ground that he had heard Ahijah preach before.* It was this prophet who took Jeroboam's mantle and rent it in pieces, and told him he was to be king over the ten tribes. That message proved true; therefore Jeroboam had confidence in Ahijah. There are some of you who at times used to hear the gospel: you have not been of late; but there were seasons when you did come up to God's house — ay, and times when you used to tremble under God's Word. If I am not mistaken, there are men and women here to-night who once were conscience-stricken; the Word of God used to come home to you with exceeding great power, and make you tremble. Did you not even profess faith in Christ? Why! some of you were very busy at revival meetings, trying to bring others to the Saviour. But your religion was like smoke out of the chimney: it has all blown away; like early mist it was soon scattered when the sun had risen. Yet the remembrance of these things sticks by you now: you cannot help it; you feel there must be something in religion. The old stings which were in your conscience have not been quite extracted; therefore at the present moment you are quite willing to listen to the Word; perhaps even hoping that it may come with true power now, and that you may after all be saved. I wish I could wake the echoes of the slumbering consciences of some of you! Oh that I could recall the days of your youth, the times of your boyhood and girlhood, when you went up to the assembly of the saints to keep holy day! Those things you cannot quite forget. I pray that such remembrances may often turn your feet towards the place of worship.

We have brought out three points of character, — *they were persons of no piety; in trouble they sought the prophet; and they had confidence in him because they had heard him preach before.* But there is one more point, — *they had one godly member of their family, and that brought them to see the prophet.* Their child was

sick and ill, and it was that which led them to inquire at the hands of the Lord. I hope there is no family here which has the misfortune to be without a believer in it. You, man, have no fear of God; but, strange to say, the Lord has taken one out of your family to be a witness for him. That daughter of yours, — you sometimes jeer at her, but you know you value her. You used to send her to the Sunday-school just to get rid of her; but the Lord met with her: and what a comfort she has been to you! how glad she has made your heart, though you do not tell her so! Perhaps the godly one in the family is like this young Ahijah in the text: he is sick, and near to die. You can recollect, though you do not fear God, how the darling boy was sick; how you sat by his little bed, and took his hand in yours, when it was scarcely anything but skin and bone; how he prayed for you at night that God would save father and mother, and take them to heaven; and how, just as he died, he looked out on you with those bright eyes, so soon to be filmed in death, and said, "Father, will you not follow me?" Since that time you have often felt that something is beckoning you up yonder; and though you have gone on forsaking God and despising holy things, yet still there is a little link between you and heaven which is not snapped yet, and you sometimes feel it tugging at your heart. I pray God it may tug so hard to-night that your heart may go up to God and lay hold of Jesus the Saviour of sinners. What joy it causes me to think that God does call one out of a godless household! because where there is one there is sure to be another before long. It is like putting a light into the midst of stubble: there will soon be a blaze. I have hope of a family when one child is converted; for grace is like precious ointment: it spreads a perfume all around. When a box of fragrant spice is put into a room, the perfume soon fills the entire chamber, then creeps silently up the stairs into the upper rooms, and ceases not its work until it has filled the whole house. So when there is true grace in a house, the Holy Spirit blesses its hallowed power, till even the lodgers and family acquaintances begin to feel the influence of it. Is it your one praying child that has brought you

here to-night? May God grant that he may be the means of bringing you to heaven as well.

But there is one sad reflection which should alarm the occasional hearer. Though Jeroboam's wife did come to the prophet that once, and heard tidings, yet *she and her husband perished, after all.* Oh! if there were a register kept of the many thousands who come inside the Tabernacle gates and listen to our voice, I am afraid, I am sadly afraid it would be found that there were many who did hear the tidings, and did tremble at them, too, who nevertheless contemned the counsels of the Most High, turned not at his rebuke, went on in their sin, and perished without hope. Shall it be so with any of you? Are you to be fagots in hell? Will you make your bed among the flames? My hearers, will you die without God and without hope? Will you leap into the black unknown, with no bright promise of the Saviour to cheer you in the thick darkness? May God prevent it! May he be pleased to bring you to Christ, the rock of your salvation, that you may depend upon him with your whole heart.

While thus speaking about the occasional hearer, an idea haunts my mind that I have been drawing somebody's portrait. I think there are some here who have had their character and conduct sketched out quite accurately enough for them to know who is meant. Do remember that if the description fits you, it is meant for you; and if you yourself have been described, do not look about among your neighbors, and say, "I think this is like somebody else." If it is like you, take it home to yourself, and God send it into the centre of your conscience, so that you cannot get rid of it.

II. Our second consideration is the USELESS DISGUISE.

Jeroboam's wife thought to herself, "If I go to see Ahijah, as he knows me to be the wife of Jeroboam, he is sure to speak angrily, and give me very bad news." Strange to tell, though the poor old gentleman was blind, she thought it necessary to put on a disguise. So she doffed her best garment, and put on

a country-woman's russet gown, and away she went. She left the sceptre and crown behind, and took a basket, as though she had just come from market. In this basket she did not put gold, jewels, and silver, but a present such as a farmer's wife might bring; there were loaves and cracknels and a cruse of honey. And as she went along, she thought, "The old gentleman will not know me." She travelled through her own dominions, and nobody knew her; she went into the neighboring dominions of Judah as far as Shiloh; and she pleased her imagination with the thought, "How I shall deceive him! I will ask him a question, as if I were a ploughman's wife. He will not know who I am; he will be pleased with my present, and prophesy soft things concerning my child." How great was her surprise! No sooner did the blind prophet hear her footsteps than he said, "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam. Why feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings?" How she started back with astonishment! She had deceived hundreds who were blessed with eyes; but here was a man who could not be deceived, but found her out before she had opened her lips, and recognized her before she had time to test her sorry artifice, or tell her subtle tale — "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam."

I do not suppose there is anybody comes here disguised as to dress to-night, though such things may happen. The working-man, who is afraid he shall be laughed at if he be known, may come here in disguise. Now and then a clergyman may come in, who would not be very comfortable in his conscience if it were known he did such a thing, and so he does not show himself exactly in his wonted garb. Notwithstanding, whoever you may be, disguised or not, it is of no use where God's gospel is preached. It is a quick discerner, and will find out the thoughts and intents of the heart. It will search you out and unmask your true character, disguise yourself as you may. Many who come to God's house are not disguised in dress, but still disguised in manner and appearance. How good you all look! When we sing, and you take your books, how heavenly-minded! and when we pray, how reverent you are! How your heads are all

bowed! — your eyes covered with your hands! I do not know what you all say in your hearts when you come in, and I should not like to know. I do not know how much praying there is when you sit in a devout posture, though you assume the attitude and compose your countenance as those who draw near to supplicate the Lord. I am afraid there are many of you who do not pray a word or present a petition, though you assume the posture of suppliants. When the singing is going on, there are many who never sing a word with the spirit and the understanding. In the house of God I am afraid there are many who wear a mask: stand as God's people stand, sit as they sit, pray as they pray, and sing as they sing, and all the while what are you doing? Some of you have been attending to your children while we have been singing to-night. Some of you have been casting up your ledger, attending to your farms, scheming about your carpentering and bricklaying; yet all the while if we had looked into your faces we might have thought you were reverently worshipping God. Oh! those solemn faces and those reverent looks — they do not deceive the Most High God. He knows who and what you are. As you are in his house, he sees you as clearly as men see through glass. As for hiding from the Almighty, how can you hide yourself from him? As well attempt to hide in a glass case; for all the world is a glass case before God. When you look into a glass beehive, you can see the bees, and everything they do: such is this world, a sort of glass beehive, in which God can see everything. The eyes of God are on you continually: no veil of hypocrisy can screen you from him. There may be some among you who occasionally sit here, some members of this church, who after all may feign to be other than they are. It is a melancholy and a most solemn reflection that there are many who profess to be Christians who are not Christians. There was a Judas among the twelve; there was a Demas among the early disciples; and we must always expect to find chaff on God's floor mingled with the wheat. I have tried, the Lord knows, to preach as plainly and as much home to the mark as I could, to sift and try you; but for all that the

hypocrite will come in. After the most searching ministry, there are still some who will wrap themselves about with a mantle of deception. Though we cry aloud and spare not, and bid you lay hold on eternal life, yet, alas! how many are content with a mere name to live, and are dead! Many come here, and even hold office in the church, yea, the minister himself may even preach the Word, and after all be hollow and empty. How many, who dress and look fair outside, are, as John Bunyan said, only fit to be tinder for the devil's tinder-box! for they are all dry and sere within. God save us from a profession if it be not real. I pray that we may know the worst of our case. If I must be damned, I would sooner go to hell unholy than as a hypocrite; that back door to the pit is the thing I dread most of all. Oh! to sit at the Lord's table, and to drink of the cup of devils! to be recognized among God's own here, and then to find one's own name left out when he reads the muster-roll of his servants! — oh! what a portion for eternity! I bid you tear off this mask; and if the grace of God is not in you, I pray you go into the world, where will be your fitting place, and abstain from joining the church, if you are not really a member of the body of Christ. You see why I urge this: because no dressing up, however neatly it may be done, can conceal us from God. Oh! how some who have been fair on earth have been startled when they thought they were going into heaven! They had their foot almost on the doorstep, but the angel came and said, "Get thee gone, thou wife of Jeroboam! I know thee whom thou art. Thou couldst deceive the minister; thou couldst deceive the deacons; thou couldst get baptized and join the church; but thou canst not enter here. Get thee gone! thy portion is with the filthy in the pit of hell." Oh, may he never say this to you and me! but may we all be so real here that he may say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Thou, God, seest me!" Write that on the palm of thy hand, and look at it; wake up in the morning with it; sleep with it before you on your curtains. "Thou, God, seest me!"

"Oh may this thought possess my breast,
Where'er I rove, where'er I rest;
Nor let my weaker passions dare
Consent to sin, for God is there!"

III. Now we come to a close with a few words upon the HEAVY TIDINGS.

The woman stood amazed as the prophet proceeded to expose the iniquity of her husband's house, the certain judgment which God would execute, and the terrible disgrace with which the name of Jeroboam should be execrated, because they had revolted from God and set up for themselves the calves of Baal. As for the child, respecting whom she had come to inquire, he should die. That death was the quenching of a bright spark in the heart of the parents, but none the less a mercy for the youth. "All Israel shall mourn for him and bury him; for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam." Let me linger on this part of the narrative a moment. In that wicked house there was one bright gem upon which the Lord put a high value, — the lad was taken from the evil to come. The kindness of the Lord appeared in his death, while all the judgments were reserved for his father's family Do I not speak to some of you, ungodly persons, who have lost your little children, and while you wept bitter tears as you carried them to the grave, you said, "Well, he is better off;" or, "she sleeps in Jesus"? Did you never think, that, as for you, ye are worse off? Ye have no hope, and are living without God in the world. Let us picture Jeroboam and his wife at the tent of their son Ahijah. There was everything to cheer the heart as to him who had departed; but everything to fill the soul with gloom concerning those who remained. The like has been the case at the funerals of your gracious little ones. We need shed no tears over the bier. Let us keep our lamentations for the mourners who attend the funeral. Ah! but ye may make the reflections all your own. You, too, have been without the gates of the city to carry your offspring to the spot in God's acre

where they now slumber. Did you think in that mournful hour that the first fruits of your household was holy unto the Lord? We never cease to wonder that the young should die. Yet it has ever been so; and well indeed can I believe that mercy of a sweet-smelling savor is to be found in those dispensations of God's providence which so often darken the windows of our heart, and wither the fairest buds in our garden. Where of old did death strike its first dart? Did it pierce the heart of Adam the sinner, or smite down the relentless Cain? Nay, but righteous Abel was the first of men who departed from earth, to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. Even so have ye, full many of you, committed your children to the dust, in an assured hope for them, according to the Word of the Lord, — a hope which ye cannot cherish for yourselves. O sinners! be chary of your tears, your sighs, and your groans; pour them not out with such profuseness as a libation at the graves of those who sleep in Jesus and are blest: ye will need them all for your own souls presently. Take ye up a lamentation for your own doom. Except ye repent, your funerals, O ungodly ones! will call for shrill notes of endless despair.

Let me pause. I have glad tidings to preach to some of you before I yet again deliver these heavy tidings to those who despise the Word.

Is there one soul here that desires to be saved? Sinner, I have glad tidings for thee. Here are the words: "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." Though thou hast been a drunkard or a swearer, though thou hast been a whoremonger or a thief, yet there is salvation for any man who comes to Jesus Christ for it. And if the Spirit of God moves thee to come now —

"Let not conscience make you linger;
Nor of fitness fondly dream:
All the fitness he requireth,
Is to feel your need of him;
This he gives you;
'Tis his Spirit's rising beam."

Thou sayest, "How can I go to Christ?" It is no great effort; it is, in fact, the absence of all effort. Thou hast not to climb to heaven to reach him, nor to travel to the ends of the earth to find him; never doubt, if the Holy Spirit be with thee, thou mayst find him to-night. The way to be saved is simply to trust Christ. Jesus Christ took the guilt of his people, and carried it himself. If thou trustest him, thou shalt have peace, for Jesus took thy sin. An old servant was once carrying a large bough of a tree to have it cut into pieces to make a fire. A little boy, one of the family, seeing the end of it dragging along the ground and making it very heavy, came and took hold of the end, and the burden grew light. Then said the servant, "Ah! Master Frank, I wish you could take hold of one end of the greater burden that I have to carry: I have a burden of sin; the more I drag it about, the heavier it becomes. I wish Jesus Christ would take hold of one end of it." The little boy said, "My mother told me, yesterday, that Jesus Christ carries all our sins; therefore you do not want Jesus Christ to drag one end of it: he will take the whole of it." The poor woman, who had been long seeking rest, found it by that remark of the child. Yes, Jesus does take your sins. If thou trustest Christ, this is the evidence that all thy sins are laid on him.

"Sinner, nothing do,
Either great or small;
Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago."

Thy salvation is finished by Christ if thou believest. Not only the first strokes, but the finishing touch Christ has given. The bath thou shalt wash in, he has filled it; the robe thou shalt wear, he has woven it; the crown thou shalt wear, he has bought it; the heaven thou shalt inhabit, he has prepared it. "It is finished!" All thou hast to do is to wear it. Take it and wear it. Accept it as a gift of his free grace. May God bring thee into such a mind that thou mayst be willing to receive it. And if thou art willing so to receive it, take it, take it, and go thy way rejoicing. Thus you see I bring good tidings to seekers.

But I have a heavy message for some of you. Let me deliver it as in the sight of God, with deep solemnity of purpose. Sinner, unrepenting sinner, I have heavy tidings for thee. Thou art now under God's wrath. The wrath of God abideth on thee. It is not as though a tempest hovered in the sky: it has gathered round thy devoted head! "God is angry with the wicked every day." Sinner, God has bent his bow and made it ready, and fitted his arrow to the string, and he has pointed it at you. He has furbished his sword and made it sharp, and it is sharp for you. O barren fig-tree! the axe is laid at thy root! God even now looks upon thee with anger as thou dost offend against him and sin with a high hand. Turn thee! turn thee! for it is either turn or burn! and God give thee to turn, lest thou burn forever. I have worse tidings still, as thou wilt think. There is speedy death for thee. I know not how long you may live; but out of this vast assembly there is every probability that one or two of us will be in eternity before next Sunday. You can calculate that as well as I can. There is a certain number of deaths in the population every week. Here are several thousands gathered here — some six or seven thousand immortal souls — and we may die; but there are some of us who *must* die. It is rarely a week passes without a death of some one in this church, much more in the congregation. I suppose I never did address the same assembly twice, and never shall; and though you were all willing to come next Sunday, yet there would be some of you who could not come, because you will have appeared at the bar of God. Prepare to meet your God. There is no cholera abroad; but death has other weapons. The fever sleeps; but the gates to the grave are many, and you may pass through one of them before ever you are aware of it. Prepare! prepare! because he will do this. "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!" I have heavy tidings for some of you. I give you warning to set your house in order, for you must die and not live. I speak now prophetically of some here present. Let them take heed unto their ways, lest the day of grace pass, and they die ere they have thought of Christ.

I have heavier tidings still. After death, the judgment. First comes the skeleton king; and then hell followeth him. Oh! is it true that some of us may be in hell before another week? True, alas! too true! I do conjure you, then, since there is this possibility; nay, since there is an absolute certainty that ere long, except we repent, we shall all likewise perish, — I do conjure you think upon your eternal state. By the wrath of God, and by the love of God; by your own soul, and by the value of it; by heaven and its joys, which you will lose; by hell and its torments, which you must endure; by the blood of Jesus; by the groans and sweat of that Redeemer who delights to receive sinners, and who declares that any who come to him he will in nowise cast out, — I pray you, as your brother and your friend, fly, fly, fly to Jesus! May the Lord help you to trust him now. There, just as you are, flat before the cross, sinner; no stopping, no waiting, no preparing; come to Jesus all in your dishabille all black and filthy — just as you are. "Mercy's gate is never shut, Jesus' heart is never hard." His blood shall never lose its power. Do thou trust him, trust him, trust him, and we will meet in heaven to praise his name, world without end. Amen.

SERMON V.

EXPIATION.

"THOU SHALT MAKE HIS SOUL AN OFFERING FOR SIN." — Isaiah liii. 10.

BOTH Jews and Gentiles knew pretty well what an offering for sin meant. The Gentiles had been in the habit of offering sacrifices. The Jews, however, had by far the clearer idea of it. And what was meant by a sin-offering? Undoubtedly, it was taken for granted by the offerer, that without shedding blood there was no remission of sin. Conscious of guilt, and anxious for pardon, therefore he brought a sacrifice, the blood of which should be poured out at the foot of the altar — feeling persuaded that without sacrifice there was no satisfaction, and without satisfaction there was no pardon. Then the victim to be offered was, on all occasions, a spotless one. The most scrupulous care was taken that it should be altogether without blemish; for this idea was always connected with a sin-offering, that it must be sinless in itself; and being without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, it was held to be a competent victim to take the offender's place. That done, the victim being selected, the offerer put his hand upon the sin-offering — and this indeed was the essence of the whole transaction — putting his hand on the victim, he confessed his sin, and a transferrence took place, in type at least, from the offender to the victim. He did, as it were, put the sin from off his own shoulders on to those of the lamb, or the bullock, or the he-goat which was now about to be slaughtered. And, to complete the sin-offering, the priest draws his knife and kills the victim, which must be utterly consumed with

fire. I say this was always the idea of a sin-offering, — that of a perfect victim; without offence on its own account, taking the place of the offender; the transferrence of the offender's sin to that victim, and that expiation in the person of the victim for the sin done by another.

Now Jesus Christ has been made by God an offering for sin; and oh that to-night we may be able to do in reality what the Jew did in metaphor! May we put our hand upon the head of Christ Jesus; as we see him offered up upon the cross for guilty men, may we know that our sins are transferred to him, and may we be able to cry, in the ecstasy of faith, "Great God, I am clean; through Jesus' blood I am clean."

I. In trying now to expound the doctrine of Christ's being an offering for sin, we will begin by laying down one great axiom; which is, that SIN DESERVES AND DEMANDS PUNISHMENT.

Certain divines have demurred to this. You are aware, I suppose, that there have been many theories of atonement; and every new or different theory of atonement involves a new or different theory of sin. There are some who say that there is no reason in sin itself why it should be punished, but that God punishes offences for the sake of society at large. This is what is called the governmental theory, — that it is necessary for the maintenance of good order that an offender should be punished, but that there is nothing in sin itself which absolutely requires a penalty. Now, we begin by opposing all this, and asserting, and we believe we have God's warrant of it, that sin intrinsically and in itself demands and deserves the just anger of God, and that that anger should be displayed in the form of a punishment. To establish this, let me appeal to the conscience — I will not say to the conscience of a man who has, by years of sin, dwindled it down to the very lowest degree, but let me appeal to the conscience of an awakened sinner, — a sinner under the influence of the Holy Spirit. And are we ever in our right senses, brethren, till the Holy Spirit really brings us into them? May it not be said of each of us as it was of the prodigal, "He came to him-

self?" Are we not beside ouselves till the Holy Spirit begins to enlighten us? Well, ask this man, who is now really in the possession of his true senses, whether he believes that sin deserves punishment; and his answer will be quick, sharp, and decisive. "Deserve it," saith he, "ay, indeed; and the wonder is that I have not suffered it. Why, sir, it seems a marvel to me that I am out of hell, and Wesley's hymn is often on my lips, —

'Tell it unto sinners, tell,
I am, I am out of hell.'"

"Yes, sir," says such a sinner, "I feel that if God should smite me now, without hope or offer of mercy, to the lowest hell, I should only have what I justly deserve; and I feel that if I be not punished for my sins, or if there be not some plan found by which my sin can be punished in another, I cannot understand how God can be just at all: how shall he be Judge of all the earth, if he suffer offences to go unpunished?" There has been a dispute whether men have any innate ideas; but surely this idea is in us as early as anything, that virtue deserves reward, and sin deserves punishment. I think I might venture to assert that if you go to the most degraded race of men, you would still find, at least, some traces of this — shall I call it tradition? or is it not a part of the natural light which never was altogether eclipsed in man? Man may put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; darkness for light, and light for darkness; but this follows him as a dog at the heels of its master, — a sense that virtue should be rewarded, and that sin must be punished. You may stifle this voice, if you will, but sometimes you will hear it; and terribly and decisively will it speak in your ears to say to you, "Yes, man, God must punish you; the Judge of all the earth cannot suffer you to go scot free." Add to this another matter; namely, that God has absolutely declared his displeasure against sin itself. There is a passage in Jeremiah, the forty-fourth chapter and the fourth verse, where he calls it "That abominable thing which I hate." And then, in Deuteronomy, the twenty-fifth chapter, at the sixteenth verse, he speaks of it as the thing which

is an abomination to him. It must be the character of God, that he has a desire to do towards his creatures that which is equitable. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" If there is anything in them which deserves reward, rest assured he will not rob them of it; and, on the other hand, he will do the right thing with those who have offended, and if they deserve punishment, it is according to the nature and character of a just and holy God that punishment should be inflicted. And we think there is nothing more clear in Scripture than the truth that sin is in itself so detestable to God that he must and will put forth all the vigor of his tremendous strength to crush it, and to make the offender feel that it is an evil and a bitter thing to offend against the Most High. Beware, ye who forget God in this matter, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you. Sin must be punished.

The other idea, that sin is only to be punished for the sake of the community, involves injustice. If I am to be damned for the sake of other people, I demur to it. No, sir: if I am to be punished, Justice says, at any rate, that it shall be for my own sins; but if I am to be eternally a castaway from God's presence merely as a sort of trick of government to maintain the dignity of his law, I cannot understand the justice of this. If I am to be cast into hell merely that I am to teach to others the tremendousness of the divine holiness, I shall say there is no justice in this; but if my sin intrinsically and of itself deserves the wrath of God, and I am sent to perdition as the result of this fact, I close my lips, and have nothing to say. I am speechless; conscience binds my tongue. But if I am told that I am only sent there as a part of a scheme of moral government, and that I am sent into torment to impress others with a sense of right, I ask that some one else should have the place of preacher to the people, and that I may be one of those whose felicity it shall be to be preached to; for I see no reason in justice why I should be selected as the victim. Really, when men run away from the simplicities of the gospel in order to make Jehovah more kind, it is strange how unjust and unkind they make him. Sinner,

God will never destroy you merely to maintain his government, or for the good of others. If you be destroyed, it shall be because you would not come to him that you might have life; because you would rebel against him; because sin from stern necessity did, as it were, compel the attribute of divine justice to kindle into vengeance, and to drive you from his presence forever. Sin must be punished.

The reverse of this doctrine, that sin demands punishment, may be used to prove it; for it is highly immoral, dangerous, and opens the floodgates of licentiousness to teach that sin can go unpunished. O sirs, it is contrary to fact. Look ye! Oh! if your eyes could see to-night the terrible justice of God which is being executed now, — if these ears could but hear it, — if ye could be appalled for a moment with

> "The sullen groans and hollow moans
> And shrieks of tortured ghosts,"

you would soon perceive that God is punishing sin! And if sin deserve not to be punished, what is Tophet but injustice on a monstrous scale? What is it but an infinite outrage against everything which is honest and right, if these creatures are punished for anything short of their own deserts. Go and preach this in hell, and you will have quenched the fire which is forever to burn, and the worm of conscience will die. Tell them in hell that they are not punished for sin, and you have taken away the very sting of their punishment. And then come to earth, and go, like Jonah went, though with another message than Jonah carried, through the highways and the broadways, the streets and thoroughfares of the exceeding great city, and proclaim that sin is not to be punished for its own intrinsic desert and baseness. But if you expect your prophecy to be believed, enlarge the number of your jails, and seek for fresh fields for transportation in the interests of society; for if any doctrine can breed villains, this will. Say that sin is not to be punished, and you have unhinged government; you have plucked up the very gate of our commonweal; you have been another Samson to another

Gaza; and we shall soon have to rue the day. But, sirs, I need not stop to prove it; it is written clearly upon the consciousness of each man, and upon the conscience of every one of us, that sin must be punished. Here are you and I to-night brought into this dilemma. We have sinned; we all like sheep have gone astray; and we must be punished for it. It is impossible, absolutely, that sin can be forgiven without a sacrifice. God must be just, if heaven falls. If earth should pass away and every creature should be lost, the justice of God must stand, it cannot by any possibility be suffered to be impugned. Let this, then, be fully established in our minds.

You need not to be told, as for the first time, that God in his infinite mercy has devised a way by which justice can be satisfied, and yet mercy can be triumphant. Jesus Christ, the only-begotten of the Father, took upon himself the form of man, and offered unto Divine Justice that which was accepted as an equivalent for the punishment due to all his people.

II. Now, the second matter that I wish to bring under your notice is this, — THAT THE PROVISION AND ACCEPTANCE OF A SUBSTITUTE FOR SINNERS IS AN ACT OF GRACE.

It is no act of grace for a person to accept a pecuniary debt on my behalf of another person. If I owe a man twenty pounds, it is no matter to him whatever who shall pay the twenty pounds so long as it is duly paid. You know that you could legally and at once demand a receipt and an acquittance from any one who is your creditor, so long as his debt is discharged, though it is discharged by another, and not by you. It is so in pecuniary matters, but it is not so in penal matters. If a man be condemned to be imprisoned, there is no law, there is no justice which can compel the lawgiver to accept a substitute for him. If the sovereign should permit another to suffer in his stead, it must be the sovereign's own act and deed. He must use his own discretion as to whether he will accept the substitute or not; and if he do so, it is an act of grace. In God's case, if he had said in the infinite sovereignty of his absolute will, "I will have no substi-

tute, but each man shall suffer for himself, he who sinneth shall die," none could have murmured. It was grace, and only grace which led the divine mind to say, "I will accept of a substitute. There shall be a vicarious suffering; and my vengeance shall be content, and my mercy shall be gratified."

Now, dear friends, this grace of God is yet further magnified not only in the allowance of the principle of substitution, but in the providing of such a substitute as Christ — on Christ's part that he should give up himself, the Prince of Life to die; the King of glory to be despised and rejected of men; the Lord of angels to be a servant of servants; and the Ancient of days to become an infant of a span long. Think of the distance

> "From the highest throne in glory
> To the cross of deepest woe,"

and consider the unexampled love which shines in Christ's gift of himself. But the Father gives the Son. "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." To give your wealth is something, if you make yourself poor; but to give your child is something more. When the patriot mother tears her son from her bosom, and cries, "Go, my first-born, to your country's wars; there, go and fight until your country's flag is safe, and the hearths and homes of your native land are secure," there is something in it; for she can look forward to the bloody spectacle of her son's mangled body, and yet love her country more than her own child. Here is heroism indeed; but God spared not his own Son, his only-begotten Son, but freely delivered him up for us all. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." I do implore you, do not look upon the sacrifice of Christ as an act of mere vengeance on the Father's part. Never imagine, oh! never indulge the idea, that Jesus died to make the Father complacent towards us. Oh, no, dear friends: Jesus' death is the effect of overwhelming and infinite love on the Father's part; and every blow which wounds, every infliction which occasions sorrow, and

every pang which rends his heart, speaks of the Father's love as much as the joy, the everlasting triumph, which now surrounds his head.

Let us add, however, to this, that, although Jesus Christ's dying as a substitute does give to him lawful right to all promised privileges, and does make him, as the covenant head of his people a claimant of the divine mercy, yet it does not render any of the gifts which we receive from God the less gifts from God. Christ has died; but still everything that we receive comes to us entirely as a gratuitous outflow of God's great heart of love. Never think you have any claim to anything because Christ purchased it. If you use the word *claim* at all, let it always be in so humble and modified a sense that you understand that you are still receiving, not of debt, but of grace. Look upon the whole transaction of a substitute, and of Christ becoming the second Adam, as being a matter of pure, rich, free, sovereign grace, and never indulge the atrocious thought, I pray you, that there was justice, and justice only here; but do magnify the love and pity of God in that he did devise and accomplish the great plan of salvation by an atoning sacrifice.

III. But now to go a step further, and with as much brevity as possible. The Lord having established the principle of substitution, having provided a substitute, and having through him bestowed upon us gratuitously innumerable mercies, let us observe THAT JESUS IS THE MOST FITTING PERSON TO BE A SUBSTITUTE, AND THAT HIS WORK IS THE MOST FITTING WORK TO BE A SATISFACTION.

Let every sinner here who desires something stable to fix his faith upon, listen to these simple truths, which I am trying to put as plainly as possible. You do understand me, I trust, that God must punish sin; that he must punish you for sin unless some one else will suffer in your stead; that Jesus Christ is the person who did suffer in the room and place of all those who ever have believed on him who do believe in him, or ever shall believe in him, —making for those who believe on him a complete atonement

by his substitution in their place. Now we say that Christ was the best person to be a substitute; for just consider what sort of a mediator was needed. Most absolutely he must be one who had no debt of his own. If Christ had been at all under the law naturally if it had been his duty to do what it is our duty to do, it is plain he could only have lived for himself; and if he had any sin of his own, he could only have died for himself, seeing his obligations to do and to suffer would have been his just due to the righteousness and the vengeance of God. But on Christ's part there was no natural necessity for obedience, much less for obedience unto death. Who shall venture to say that the Divine Lord, amidst the glories of heaven, owed to his father anything? Who shall say it was due to the Divine Father that Christ should be nailed to the accursed tree, to suffer, bleed, and die, and then be cast into the grave? None can dare to say such a thing. He is himself perfectly free, and therefore can he undertake for others. One man who is drawn for the militia cannot be a substitute for another person so drawn, because he owes for himself his own personal service. I must, if I would escape, and would procure a substitute, find a man who is not drawn, and who is therefore exempt. Such is Jesus Christ. He is perfectly exempt from service, and therefore can volunteer to undertake it for our sake. He is the right person.

There was needed, also, one of the same nature with us. Such is Jesus Christ. For this purpose he became man, of the substance of his mother, very man, such a man as any of us. Handle him, and see if he be not flesh and bones. Look at him, and mark if he be not man in soul as well as in body. He hungers; he thirsts, he fears, he weeps, he rejoices, he loves, he dies. Made in all points and like unto us, being a man, and standing exactly in a man's place, becoming a real Adam, — as true an Adam as was the first Adam, standing quite in the first Adam's place, — he is a fit person to become a substitute for us.

But please to observe (see if you cannot throw your grappling-hooks upon this), the dignity of his sacred person made him the most proper person for a substitute. A mere man could

at most only be a substitute for one other man. Crush him as you will, and make him feel in his life every pang which flesh is heir to, but he can only suffer what one man would have suffered. He could not, I will venture to say, even then have suffered an equivalent for that eternal misery which the ungodly deserve; and if he were a mere man, he must suffer precisely the same. A difference may be made in the penalty, when there is a difference in the person; but if the person be the same, the penalty must be precisely and exactly the same in degee and in quality. But the dignity of the Son of God, the dignity of his nature, changes the whole matter. A God bowing his head, and suffering and dying, in the person of manhood, puts such a singular efficacy into every groan and every pang that it needs not that his pangs should be eternal, or that he should die a second death. Remember that in pecuniary matters you must give a *quid pro quo*, but that in matters of penal justice no such thing is demanded. The dignity of the person adds a special force to the substitution; and thus one bleeding Saviour can make atonement for millions of sinful men, and the Captain of our salvation can bring multitudes unto glory.

It needs one other condition to be fulfilled. The person so free from personal service, and so truly in our nature, and yet so exalted in person, *should also be accepted and ordained of God.* Our text gives this a full solution, in that it says, "*He* shall make his soul an offering for sin." Christ did not make himself a sin-offering without a warrant from the Most High: God made him so. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." It was the sovereign degree of heaven which constituted Christ the great substitute for his people. No man taketh this office upon himself. Even the Son of God stoopeth not to this burden uncalled. He was chosen as the covenant-head in election; he was ordained in the divine decree to stand for his people. God the Father cannot refuse the sacrifice which he has himself appointed. "My son," said good old Abraham, "God shall provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." He

has done so in the Saviour; and what God provides, God must and will accept.

I wish to-night that I had power to deal with this doctrine as I would. Poor trembling sinner, look up a moment. Dost thou see him there — him whom God hath set forth? Dost thou see him in proper flesh and blood fastened to that tree? See how the cruel iron drags through his tender hands! Mark how the rough nails are making the blood flow profusely from his feet! See how fever parches his tongue, and dries his whole body like a potsherd! Hearest thou the cry of his spirit, which is suffering more than his body suffers — "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This is none other than God's only-begotten Son; this is he who made the worlds; this is the express image of his Father's person, the brightness of Jehovah's glory! What thinkest thou, man? Is there not enough there to satisfy God? Truly it has satisfied God: is there not enough there to satisfy thee? Cannot thy conscience rest on that? If God's appointed Christ could suffer in thy stead, is it not enough? What can Justice ask more? Wilt thou now trust Christ with thy soul? Come, now, sir, wilt thou now fall flat at the foot of the cross, and rest thy soul's eternal destiny in the pierced hands of Jesus of Nazareth? If thou wilt, then God has made him to be a sin-offering for thee; but if thou wilt not, beware, lest he whom thou wouldst not have to be thy Saviour should become thy Judge, and say, "Depart, thou cursed one, into everlasting fire in hell!"

IV. We come now to our fourth remark, — THAT CHRIST'S WORK, AND THE EFFECTS OF THAT WORK, ARE NOW COMPLETE.

Christ becomes a substitute for us. We have seen how fit and proper a person he was to be such. We hinted that from the dignity of his person the pains he suffered were a good and sufficient equivalent for our own suffering on account of sin. But now the joyous truths come up that Christ's work is finished. Christ has made an atonement so complete that he never need suffer again. No more drops of blood; no more pangs of

heart; no more bitterness and darkness, with exceeding heaviness, even unto death, are needed.

"'Tis done — the great transaction's done."

The death-knell of the penalty rings in the dying words of the Saviour, — "It is finished." Do you ask for a proof of this? Remember that Jesus Christ rose again from the dead. If he had not completed his work of penalty-suffering, he would have been left in the tomb till now; our preaching would have been in vain, and your faith would have been in vain; ye would have been yet in your sins. But Jesus rose. God's sheriff's officer let him out of "durance vile" because the account had been discharged, and God's great Court of King's Bench sent down the *mittimus* to let the captive go free. More than that: Christ has ascended up on high. Think you he would have returned thither with unexpiated sin red upon his garments? Do you suppose he would have ascended to the rest and to the reward of an accomplished work? What! sit at his Father's right hand to be crowned for doing nothing, and rest until his adversaries are made his footstool, when he has not performed his Father's will! Absurd! Impossible! His ascension in stately pomp, amidst the acclamations of angels, to the enjoyment of his Father's continued smile, is the sure proof that the work is complete.

Complete it is, dear brethren, not only in itself, but, as I said, in its effects; that is to say, that there is now complete pardon for every soul which believeth in Christ. You need not do anything to make the atonement of Christ sufficient to pardon you. It wants no eking out. It is not as if Christ had put so much into the scale and it was quivering in the balance; but your sins, for all their gravity, utterly ceased their pressure through the tremendous weight of his atonement. He has outweighed the penalty, and given double for all your sins. Pardon, full and free, is now presented in the name of Jesus, proclaimed to every creature under heaven, for sins past, for sins present, and for sins to come; for blasphemies and murders; for drunkenness and

whoredom; for all manner of sin under heaven. Jesus Christ hath ascended up on high, and exalted he is that he may give repentance and remission of sin. Ye have no need of shillings to pay the priests; nor is baptismal water wanted to effect the pardon: there is no willing, doing, being, or suffering of yours required to complete the task. The blood has filled the fountain full: thou hast but to wash and be clean, and thy sins shall be gone forever.

Justification, too, is finished. You know the difference. Pardon takes away our filth, but then it leaves us naked; justification puts a royal robe upon us. Now no rags of yours are wanted; not a stitch of yours is needed to perfect what Christ has done. He whom God the Father hath accepted as a sin-offering hath perfected forever those who are set apart. Ye are complete in Christ. No tears of yours, no penance, no personal mortifications, nay, no good works of yours, are wanted to make yourself complete and perfect. Take it as it is. O sirs! may you have grace to take it as it is freely presented to you in the gospel. "He that believeth on him is not condemned;" "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Trust Christ — implicitly trust Christ; and all that he did shall cover you, while all that he suffered shall cleanse you.

Remember, too, that acceptance is finished. There are the Father's arms, and here are you, a black sinner to-night. I do not know you, but it may be you have trodden the pavements, or you have gone further than that, and added drunkenness to shame; you have gone to the lowest vice, perhaps to robbery, — who knoweth what manner of person may step into this place? — but the great arms of the Eternal Father are ready to save you as you are, because the great work of Christ has effected all that is wanted before God for the acceptance of the vilest sinner. How is it that the Father can embrace the prodigal? Why! he is fresh from the swine-trough! Look at him: look at his rags; how foul they are! We would not touch them with a pair of tongs! Take him to the fire and burn the filth! Take him to the bath and wash him! That lip is not fit to kiss; those filthy

lips cannot be permitted to touch that holy cheek of the glorious Father! Ah! but it is not so. While he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, — rags and poverty and sin and filth and all, — and he did not wait till he was clean, but ran and fell upon his neck and kissed him, just as he was. How could he do that? Why, the parable does not tell us; for it did not run on with the subject to introduce the atonement. But this explains it, — when God accepts a sinner, he is, in fact, only accepting Christ. He looks into the sinner's eyes, and he sees his own dear Son's image there, and he takes him in. As we have heard of a good woman, who, whenever a poor sailor came to her door, whoever he might be, would always make him welcome, because, she said, "I think I see my own dear son who has been these many years away, and I have never heard of him; but whenever I see a sailor, I think of him, and treat the stranger kindly for my son's sake." So my God, when he sees a sinner long for pardon and desirous of being accepted, thinks he sees his Son in him, and accepts him for his Son's sake. Do not imagine that we preach a gospel in this place for respectable, godly people. No: we preach a gospel here for sinners. I heard, the other day, from one who told me that he believed we were saved by being perfect, that when we committed sin we at once fell out of God's mercy. Well now, supposing that were true, it would not be worth making a large splutter about. It would not be worth angels singing "Glory to God in the highest" about it, I should think. Any fool might know that God would accept a perfect man. But this is the thing of marvel, for which heaven and earth shall ring with the praises of the Mediator, that Jesus Christ died for the ungodly, — that Jesus Christ gave himself for their sin; not for their righteousness, not for their good deeds. If he had looked to all eternity, he could not have seen anything in us worthy of so great a suffering as that which he endured; but he did it for charity's sake, — for love's sake.

And now, in his name, — oh that I could do it with his voice and with his love and with his fervor! — I do beseech you to lay hold upon him. No matter who you may be, I will not exclude

you from the invitation. Hast thou piled thy sins together till they seem to provoke heaven? Do thy sins touch the clouds? Yet come, and welcome; for God has provided a sin-offering. Has man cast thee out? Say, poor woman, does the dreary river seem to invite thee to the fatal plunge? God has not cast thee out. O thou who feelest in thine own body the effect of thy sin, till thou art loathing thyself, and wishing thou hadst never been born — perhaps thou sayest, like John Bunyan, "Oh that I had been a frog, or a toad, or a snake, sooner than have been a man, to have fallen into such sin, and to have become so foul!" Have courage, sinner; have courage. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Do not doubt this message: God has sent it to you. Do not reject it: you will reject your own life if you do. Turn you at his rebuke! It is a loving voice which speaks to you, and that would speak, perhaps, better and more forcibly if it were not choked with love. I do implore thee, sinner, come to Jesus! If thou art damned, it is not for want of invitation. If thou wilt perish, it is not for want of earnest pleading with thee. I tell thee, man, there is nothing of thine own wanted. All this is found in the sin-offering; for thou needest not find it. There is no merit of thine needed; there is merit enough in Christ. Is it not the old proverb that you are not to take coals to Newcastle? Do not take anything to Christ. Come as you are — just as you are. Nay, tarry not till you go out of this house. The Lord enable you to believe in Jesus now, to take him now as a complete and finished salvation for you, though you may be the most sunken and abandoned and hopeless of all characters. Why did God provide a sin-offering but for sinners? He could not have wanted to provide it if there was no necessity. You have a great necessity. You have, shall I say? compelled him to it. Your sins have nailed Christ's hands to the cross, — your sins have pierced his heart; and his heart is not pierced in vain, nor are those hands nailed there for naught. Christ will have you, sinner;

Christ will have you. There are some of God's elect here, and he will have you. You shall not stand out against him. Almighty love will have you. He has determined that you shall not do what you have vowed. Your league with hell is broken to-night, and your covenant with death is disannulled. The prey shall not be taken from the mighty; the lawful captive shall be delivered. The Lord will yet fetch you up from the depths of the sea. Oh! what a debtor to grace you will be! Be a debtor to that grace to-night. Over head and ears in debt, plunge yourself by a simple act of trusting in Jesus, and you are saved.

Pray, ye who know how to pray, that this message may be made effective in the hand of God. And you who have never prayed before, God help you to pray now. May he now be found of them who sought not for him, and he shall have the **glory, world without end. Amen.**

SERMON VI.

THE BARLEY-FIELD ON FIRE.

"ABSALOM SENT FOR JOAB, TO HAVE SENT HIM TO THE KING; BUT HE WOULD NOT COME TO HIM: AND WHEN HE SENT AGAIN, THE SECOND TIME, HE WOULD NOT COME. THEREFORE HE SAID UNTO HIS SERVANTS, SEE, JOAB'S FIELD IS NEAR MINE, AND HE HATH BARLEY THERE: GO AND SET IT ON FIRE. AND ABSALOM'S SERVANTS SET THE FIELD ON FIRE. THEN JOAB AROSE, AND CAME TO ABSALOM UNTO HIS HOUSE, AND SAID UNTO HIM, WHEREFORE HAVE THY SERVANTS SET MY FIELD ON FIRE?" — 2 Samuel xiv 29–31.

You remember the historical narrative. Absalom had fled from Jerusalem under fear of David's anger. He was after a time permitted to return; but he was not admitted into the presence of the king. Earnestly desiring to be restored to his former posts of honor and favor, he besought Joab to come to him, intending to request him to act as mediator. Joab, having lost much of his liking for the young prince, refused to come; and, though he was sent for repeatedly, he declined to attend at his desire. Absalom therefore thought of a most wicked, but most effective plan of bringing Joab into his company. He bade his servants set Joab's field of barley on fire. This brought Joab down in high wrath to ask the question, "Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire?" This was all that Absalom wanted; he wished an interview, and he was not scrupulous as to the method by which he obtained it. The burning of the barley-field brought Joab into his presence, and Absalom's ends were accomplished.

Omitting the sin of the deed, we have here a picture of what

is often done by our gracious God, with the wisest and best design. Often he sendeth for us, not for his profit, but for ours He would have us come near to him and receive a blessing at his hands; but we are foolish and cold-hearted and wicked, and we will not come. He, knowing that we will not come by any other means, sendeth a serious trial: he sets our barley-field on fire; which he has a right to do, seeing our barley-fields are far more his than they are ours. In Absalom's case it was wrong; in God's case he has a right to do as he wills with his own. He takes away from us our most choice delight, upon which we have set our heart, and then we inquire at his hands, "Wherefore contendest thou with me? Why am I thus smitten with thy rod? What have I done to provoke thee to anger?" And thus we are brought into the presence of God, and we receive blessings of infinitely more value than those temporary mercies which the Lord had taken from us. You will see, then, how I intend to use my text this morning. As the pastor of so large a church as this, I am constantly brought into contact with all sorts of human sorrow. Frequently it is poverty, — poverty too which is not brought on by idleness or vice, but real poverty, and most distressing and afflicting poverty too, because it visits those who have fought well the battle of life, and have struggled hard for years, and yet in their old age scarce know where bread shall come from, except that they rest upon the promise — "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure." Messengers come to me sometimes as fast as they came to Job, bearing sad tidings concerning one and another of you. There comes one — "I entreat your prayers for me, sir: God has been pleased to take away my wife with a stroke; she now lies in the cold grave." Another cries, "O sir, my wife is sore sick, and the physician saith that there is but little hope: pray for her, that she may be strengthened in the hour of her departure; and for me, that I may be enabled to kiss the Master's rod." Then comes another — "My son is afflicted; he is to undergo a painful operation: pray that the surgeon's knife may not be his death, but that he may be enabled to bear up under it." And when I

have sympathized with a company of sad complaints like these, another set of messengers will be waiting at the door. How few families are long without severe trials! hardly a person escapes for any long season without tribulation. With impartial hand sorrow knocks at the door of the palace and the cottage. Why all this? The Lord, we know, "Doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men" for naught; why can it be that he employs so many frowning servants, and sendeth out so often his usher of the black rod? Wherefore can it be? Perhaps I may be able to give the fitting answer to this very proper inquiry, and it may be that I may be as serviceable to the afflicted as the jailer was to Paul and Silas when he washed their stripes.

I shall use my text, first of all, *in reference to believers;* and then, *with regard to the unconverted.* Oh for help from above!

I. First of all, brethren, let us use the text WITH REFERENCE TO BELIEVERS IN CHRIST.

My beloved brethren and sisters is Jesus Christ, *we* cannot expect to avoid tribulation. If other men's barley-fields are not burned, ours will be. If the Father uses the rod nowhere else, he will surely make his true children smart. As Paul saith, and as our hymnster hath rhymed it —

> "Bastards may escape the rod,
> Sunk in earthly vain delight,
> But the true-born child of God
> Must not — would not if he might."

Your Saviour hath left you a double legacy, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but in me ye shall have peace." You enjoy peace; you must not expect that you shall escape without the privilege of the tribulation. All wheat must be threshed: and God's threshing-floor witnesses to the weight of the flail as much as any other. Gold must be tried in the fire; and truly the Lord hath a fire in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.

But you, beloved, have four very special comforts in all your trouble. You have, first, this sweet reflection, that *there is no*

curse in your cross. Christ was made a curse for us, and we call his cross the accursed tree ; but, truly, since Jesus hung upon it, it is most blessed ; and I may now say concerning the cross of affliction, "Blessed is every man who hangeth on this tree." The cross may be very heavy, especially while it is green, and our shoulders unused to carrying it ; but remember, though there may be a ton-weight of sorrow in it, there is not a single ounce of the curse in it. God doth never punish his children in the sense of avenging justice : he chastens as a father does his child, but he doth never punish his redeemed as a judge doth a criminal. It were unjust to exact punishment from redeemed souls, since Christ has been punished in their place and stead. How shall the Lord punish twice for one offence? If Christ took my sins and stood as my substitute, then there is no wrath of God for me ; and though my cup may be bitter, yet there cannot be a single drop of the wormwood of Almighty wrath in it. I may have to smart, but it will never be beneath the lictor's rods of justice, but under the Parent's rod of wisdom. O Christian! how sweet this ought to be to you! There was a time when you were under conviction of sin, — when you thought you would rot in a dungeon or burn at the stake most cheerfully, if you could but get rid of the sense of God's wrath ; and will you now become impatient? The wrath of God is the thunderbolt which scathes the soul ; and now that you are delivered from that tremendous peril, you must not be overwhelmed with the few showers and gales which Providence sends you. A God of love inflicts our sorrows : he is as good when he chastens as when he caresses : there is no more wrath in his afflicting providences than in his deeds of bounty. God may seem unkind to unbelief, but faith can always see love in his heart. Oh! what a mercy that Sinai has ceased to thunder! Lord, let Jesus say what he will, so long as Moses is quieted forever. Strike, Lord, if thou wilt, now that thou hast heard the Saviour's plea and justified our souls.

You have, secondly, another ground of comfort ; namely, *that your troubles are all apportioned to you by divine wisdom and love.*

As for their number, if He appoint them ten, they never can be eleven. As for their weight, He who weigheth the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance, takes care to measure your troubles, and you shall not have a grain more than his infinite wisdom sees fit. The devil may seem to be turned loose upon you, but remember he is always a chained enemy. There is a tether to every trouble, and beyond that tether it can never stray. Nebuchadnezzar may heat the furnace seven times hotter than usual, but God's thermometer measures the exact degree of heat; and beyond it the flame cannot rage, even though a thousand Nebuchadnezzars should swear themselves out of breath in their fury. Consider everything that you have to suffer as the appointment of wisdom, ruled by love, and you will rejoice in all your tribulation, knowing that it shall reveal to you the loving-kindness and wisdom of your God.

You have a third consolation; namely, that under your cross *you have many special comforts.* There are cordials which God giveth to sick saints which he never putteth to the lips of those who are in health. Dark caverns keep not back the miners, if they know that diamonds are to be found there: you need not fear suffering, when you remember what riches it yields to your soul. There is no hearing the nightingale without night, and there are some promises which only sing to us in trouble. It is in the cellar of affliction that the good old wine of the kingdom is stored. You shall never see Christ's face so well as when all others turn their backs upon you. When you have come into such confusion that human wisdom is at a nonplus, then shall you see God's wisdom manifest and clear. Oh the love-visits which Christ payeth to his people when they are in the prison of their trouble! Then he layeth bare his very heart to them, and comforts them as a mother doth her child. They sleep daintily who have Jesus to make their beds. Suffering saints are generally the most flourishing saints; and well they may be, for they are Jesus' special care. If you would find a man whose lips drop with pearls, look for one who has been in the deep waters. We seldom learn much except as it is beaten into us by the rod in

Christ's schoolhouse, under Madam Trouble. God's vines owe more to the pruning-knife than to any other tool in the garden; superfluous shoots are sad spoilers of the vines. But even while we carry it, the cross brings present comfort: it is a dear, dear cross, all hung with roses, and dripping with sweet-smelling myrrh. Rutherford seemed at times in doubt which he loved best, Christ or his cross; but then, good man, he only loved the cross for his Lord's sake. Humble souls count it a high honor to be thought worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. If ever heaven be opened at all to the gaze of mortals, the vision is granted to those who dwell in the Patmos of want and trouble. Furnace-joys glow quite as warmly as furnace-flames. Sweet are the uses of adversity, and sweet are its accompaniments when the Lord is with his people.

"'Mid the gloom the vivid lightnings
With increasing brightness play;
'Mid the thorn-brake beauteous flowerets
Look more beautiful and gay.

"So, in darkest dispensations
Doth my faithful Lord appear,
With his richest consolations
To reanimate and cheer."

But then, — and this is the point to which my text brings me, and all I have already said is going astray from it, — you have this comfort, that *your trials work your lasting good* by bringing you nearer and nearer to your God. This point we will illustrate by the narrative before us. My dear friends in Christ Jesus, *our heavenly Father often sends for us and we will not come.* He sends for us *to exercise a more simple faith in him.* We have believed, and by faith we have passed from death unto life, but our faith sometimes staggers. We have not yet reached to Abraham's confidence in God; we do not leave our worldly cares with him, but, like Martha, we cumber ourselves with much serving. We have faith to lay hold upon little promises; but we are ofttimes afraid to open our mouths wide though God has

promised to fill them. He therefore sendeth to us. "Come, my child," saith he; "come and trust me. The veil is rent: enter into my presence, and approach boldly to the throne of my grace I am worthy of thy fullest confidence: cast thy cares on me. Come thou into the sunlight, and read thy title clear. Shake thyself from the dust of thy cares, and put on thy beautiful garment of faith." But, alas! though called with tones of love to the blessed exercise of this comforting grace, we will not come. At another time he calls us *to closer communion with himself.* We have been sitting on the doorstep of God's house, and he bids us advance into the banqueting-hall and sup with him; but we decline the honor. He has admitted us into the inner chambers, but there are secret rooms not yet opened to us; he invites us to enter them, but we hold back. Jesus longs to have near communion with his people. This is that which gives him "to see of the travail of his soul, and to be satisfied." It must be a joy to a Christian to be with Christ; but it is also a joy to Jesus to be with his people, for it is written, "His delights were with the sons of men." Now, one would think that if Christ did but beckon with his finger and say to us, "Draw nigh, and commune with me," we should fly as though we had wings to our feet; but, instead thereof, we are cleaving to the dust: we have too much business; we have too many carking cares; and we forget to come, though it is our Beloved's voice which calls us to himself. Frequently the call is *to more fervent prayer.* Do you not feel in yourself, at certain seasons, an earnest longing for private prayer? You have felt as if you could not be at ease until you could draw near unto God and tell him your wants; and yet, may be, you have quenched the Spirit in that respect, and still have continued without nearness of access to God. Every day the Lord bids his people come to him and ask what they will, and it shall be done. He is a bounteous God, who sits upon the mercy-seat, and he delights so give to his people the largest desires of their hearts; and yet, shame upon us, we live without exercising this power of prayer, and we miss the plenitude of blessing which would come out of that cornucopia of

grace, — prevailing prayer with God. Ah, brethren, we are verily guilty here, the most of us. The Master sendeth to us to pray, and we will not come. Often, too, he calls us to *a higher state of piety.* From this pulpit I have labored to stir you up to nobler attainments; I have besought you to rest no longer satisfied with your dwarfish attainments, but to press forward to things more sublime and heavenly. Have I not cried unto you, beloved, and bid you

> "Forget the steps already trod,
> And onward urge your way"?

I am persuaded there are Christians as much in grace beyond ordinary Christians as ordinary Christians are beyond the profane. There are heights which common eyes have never seen, much less scaled. Oh! there are nests among the stars where God's own saints dwell, and yet how many of us are content to go creeping along like worms in the dust! Would that we had grace to cleave the clouds and mount into the pure blue sky of fellowship with Christ! We do not serve God as we should. We are cold as ice, when we should be like molten metal, burning our way through all opposition. We are like the barren Sahara, when we should be blooming like the garden of the Lord. We give to God pence, when he deserveth pounds; nay, deserveth our heart's blood to be coined in the service of his church and of his truth. Oh! we are but poor lovers of our sweet Lord Jesus; not fit to be his servants, much less to be his brides. If he had put us in the kitchen to be scullions, I fear we are scarce fit for the service; and yet he hath exalted us to be bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, married to him by a glorious marriage covenant. O brethren! God often calleth us to higher degrees of piety, and yet we will not come.

Now, why is it that we permit our Lord to send for us so often, without going to him? Let your own heart give the reason, in a humble confession of your offences. O my brethren, we never thought we should have been so bad as we are. If an angel had told us that we should be so indifferent towards

Christ, we should have said, as Hazael did to Elisha, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" If any of us could have seen our own history written out by a prophet's pen, we should have said, "No; it cannot be. If Christ forgives me, I must love him; if he be pleased to make me his own brother, I must serve him; if I am the recipient of such splendid mercies, I must do something commensurate with his bounty." And yet, hitherto, here we have been ungrateful, unbelieving, and even refusing to listen to his call, or come at his bidding. He has said, "Seek ye my face;" and our heart did not say, "Lord, thy face will I seek." Because of all this, because we will not listen to the gentle call of God, there cometh trouble, just as there came the burning of the barley-field of Joab because he would not visit the young prince. Trouble comes in all sorts of shapes. Little doth it matter what form it cometh in, if it doth but answer the purpose of making us obey the divine calling.

Some Christians have their trial in the shape of *sickness:* they drag about with them a diseased body all their lives; or they are suddenly cast upon a bed of sickness, and they toss to and fro, by night and by day, in pain and weariness. This is God's medicine; and when God's children have it, let them not think it is sent to kill them, but to heal them. Much medicine which the physician gives makes the man ill for a time: he is worse with it than he would have been without it; but if he be a clever physician, he knows that this is the consequence of the medicine; and thus he is not at all alarmed by the pain of his patient, but he expects that all this will work for good, and hunt out, as it were, the original disease. When the Lord sends us sore sickness, it for a time perhaps makes our former spiritual infirmities grow worse; for sickness often provoketh impatience and murmurings against God, but in due time our proud spirits will be broken, and we shall cry for mercy. As a file takes off rust, so does sickness frequently remove our deadness of heart. The diamond hath much cutting, but its value is increased thereby; and so with the believer under the visitations of God. I have

heard say of many ministers that they preach best after sickness, till their people have scarce regretted all the pains they have felt when they have found how savory and full of marrow have been their words. My brother, if you will not come to God without it, he will send you a sick-bed that you may be carried on it to him. If you will not come running, he will make you come limping. If you will not come while your eyes are bright and while your countenance is full of health, he will make you come when your eyes are dull and heavy, and your complexion is sallow and sad But come you must; and if by no other means, sickness shall be the black chariot in which you shall ride.

Losses, too, are frequently the means God uses to fetch home his wandering sheep: like fierce dogs, they worry the wanderers back to the shepherd. There is no making lions tame if they are too well fed; they must be brought down from their great strength, and their stomachs must be lowered a bit, and then they will submit to the tamer's hand: and often have we seen the Christian rendered obedient to his Lord's will by straitness of bread and hard labor. When rich and increased in goods, many professors carry their heads much too loftily and speak much too boastfully. Like David, they boast, "My mountain standeth fast; it shall never be moved." When the Christian groweth wealthy, is in good repute, hath good health, and a happy family, he too often admits Mr. Carnal Security to feast at his table. If he be a true child of God, there is a rod preparing for him. Wait awhile, and it may be you will see his substance melt away as a dream. There goes a portion of his estate — how soon the acres change hands! There goes a part of his business — no profits will ever come to him again in that direction. That debt yonder, a dishonored bill over there — how fast his losses come! where will they end? Now, as these embarrassments come in one after another, he begins to be distressed about them, and betakes himself to his God. O blessed waves, that wash the man on the rock of salvation! O blessed cords, though they may cut the flesh, if they draw us to Jesus! Losses in business are often sanctified to our

soul's enriching. If you will not come to the Lord full-handed, you shall come empty. If God in his grace findeth no other means of making you to honor him among men — if you cannot honor him on the pinnacle of riches — he will bring you down to the valley of poverty.

Bereavements, too, — ah! what sharp cuts of the rod we get with these, my brethren! We know how the Lord sanctifies these to the bringing of his people near to himself. How glad we should be to think that Christ himself once suffered bereavements as we have done. Tacitus tells us that an amber ring was thought to be of no value among the Romans till the emperor took to wearing one, and then straightway an amber ring was held in high esteem. Bereavements might be looked upon as very sad things; but when we recollect that Jesus wept over his friend Lazarus, henceforth they are choice jewels, and special favors from God. Christ wore this ring: then I must not blush to wear it. Many a mother has been stirred up to a holier life by the death of her infant, — many a husband has been led to give his heart more to Christ by the death of his wife. Do not departed spirits, like angels, beckon us up to heaven? "Come, come away," they say; "this is not your rest. I once could build upon the same tree, and sing upon the same bough; but now I am taken from you, — now I rest in heaven. Come hither, thou who wast once my fond mate — come hither, for all the trees where thou art building are marked for the axe; therefore come now, and dwell with me!" Yes, we must look upon our new-made graves in this light, and pray the Lord to dig our hearts with the funeral spade, and bury our sins as we bury our departed ones. *Trials in your family*, in your children, are another form of the burning barley-field. I do not know, brethren, but I think a living cross is much heavier to carry than a dead one. I know some among you who have not lost your children: I could have wished ye had, for they have lived to be your grief and sorrow. Ah, young man! better that your mother should have seen you perish in the birth than that you should live to disgrace your father's name. Ah, man! it were better for you

that the procession had gone winding through the streets, bearing your corpse down to the grave, than that you should live to blaspheme your mother's God, and laugh at the Book which is her treasure. It were better for you that you had never been born, and better for your parents too. Ah! but, dear friends, even these are meant to draw us nearer to Christ. We must not make idols of our children; and we dare not do it, when we see how manifestly God shows us that, like ourselves, they are by nature children of wrath. Sharper than an adder's tooth is an unthankful child; but the venom is turned to medicine in God's hand. God's birds would often keep down in the grass in their nests; but he fills their nests full of thorns, and then up they fly, and sing as a lark as they mount towards heaven. You must look upon these family trials as invitations from God — sweet compulsion to make you seek his face. Many are afflicted in another way, which is perhaps as bad as anything else, — by a *deep depression of spirit.* They are always melancholy; they know not why. There are no stars in the night for them, and the sun gives no light by day: melancholy has marked them for her own; but even this, I think, is often the means of keeping some of them nearer to God than they would be. You know there are some of our English plants which greatly affect damp, moist places under trees. If the sun were to shine in their faces they would die. Perhaps some minds are of the same order. Too many sweets make children sick, and bitters are a good tonic. A veil is needed for some delicate complexions, lest the sun look too fiercely on them: it may be, these mourners need the veil of sorrow. It is good that they have been afflicted, even with this heavy depression of spirit, because it keeps them near their God. Then there is that other affliction, the *hiding of God's countenance* — how hard to bear, but how beneficial! If we will not keep near to our Lord, he is sure to hide his face. You have seen a mother walking out with her little child, when it has just learned to walk; and as she goes through the street, the little one is for running sometimes to the right, and sometimes to the left, and so the mother hides herself a moment;

then the child looketh round for the mother, and begins to cry, and then out comes the mother. What is the effect? Why, it will not run away from mother any more: it is sure to keep hold of her hand afterwards. So, when we get wandering from God, he hides his face, and then, since we have a love for him, we begin crying after him; and when he shows his face once more, we cling to him the more lovingly ever afterwards. So the Lord is pleased to bless our troubles to us.

Now, Christian, what about all this? Why, just this. Are you under any sharp trouble now? Then I pray you go to God as Joab went to Absalom. "Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire?" "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me." "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Make this a special season of humbling and heart-searching. Now let every besetting sin be driven out. When God sweeps, do you search. When you are under the rod, it is yours to make a full confession of past offences, and pray to be delivered from their power in the future. Or, have you no trial to-day, my brother? Then see if there be not something which may provoke God to send one, and begin now to purge yourself from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit by the Holy Ghost. Prevention is better than a cure; and sometimes a timely heart-searching may save us many a heart-smarting. Let us see to that, then. Or have we been afflicted, and is the affliction over now? Then, let us say with David, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." Let us bless God for all that he has done, saying, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted;" let us join together in one common hymn of praise for all the loving-kindness which God has been pleased to show us in the sharp cuts of his rod. I have said enough, I think, to the Christian, to work out the little picture before us. God has burned your barley-field, dear friends: now go to him, and the closer you can approach to him, and the more firmly you can cling to him, the

better for your soul's health and comfort all your life. At the last, you and I shall sing to the praise of our afflicting God.

"All I meet I find assists me
In my path to heavenly joy;
Where, though trials now attend me,
Trials never more annoy.

"Blest there with a weight of glory,
Still the path I'll ne'er forget,
But, exulting, cry, It led me
To my blessed Saviour's seat."

II. A few words — God make them mighty — TO THE SINNER shall form the second part of our discourse. God also has sent *for you*. O unconverted man! God has often sent for you. Early in your childhood your mother's prayers sought to woo you to a Saviour's love, and your godly father's first instructions were as so many meshes of the net in which it was desired that you should be taken; but you have broken through all these, and lived to sin away early impressions and youthful promises. Since that you have often been called under the ministry. Our sermons have not been all shots wide of the mark, but sometimes a hot shot has burnt its way into your conscience and you have been made to tremble; but, alas! the trembling soon gave way before your old sins. Hitherto you have been called, but you refused. The hands of mercy have been stretched out, and you have not regarded them. You have had calls, too, from your Bible, from religious books, from Christian friends. Holy zeal is not altogether dead, and it shows itself by looking after your welfare. Young man, your shopmate has sometimes spoken to you; young woman, your companion has wept over you. There are some of you now present who have been called by the most loving of voices, in connection with our classes. Both in our Sunday-school and in the catechumenical classes there are men and women with deep love to the souls of those committed to them, — tender hearts, weeping eyes, — and you have been wept over that you might come to Christ; but still all the agency that

has been employed has been up to this moment without effect: you are a stranger to the God who made you, and an enemy to Christ the Saviour.

Well, if these gentle means will not do, God will employ other agencies. Perhaps he has tried them already. If not, — if he intendeth in the divine decree your eternal salvation, — he will, as sure as you are a living man, use stronger ways with you; and if a word will not do, he will come with a blow, though he loveth to try the power of the word first. You, too, my hearer unconverted and unsaved, have had your trials. You weep as well as Christians. You may not weep for sin, but sin shall make you weep. You may abhor repentance because of its sorrow, but you shall not escape sorrow, even if you escape repentance. You have had your sickness. Do you not remember it, when in the silent night you heard the watch ticking out, as you thought, your last few minutes, and foretelling your doom? Do you remember those weary days, when you tossed from side to side, and did but shift the place and keep the pain? Man, can you recollect your vows, which you have lived to break, and your promises with which you lied unto the eternal God? Then the Sabbath would be your delight, you said, if you were spared, and the house of God and the people of God should be dear to you, and you would seek his face. But you have not done so: you have broken your covenant, and have despised your promise made to God. Or, what is it, have you had losses in business? You began life well and hopefully, but nothing has prospered with you. I am not sorry for it; for I remember it is the wicked who spreadeth himself like a green bay tree, and it is concerning the reprobate that it is written, "There are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." I am glad that you are plagued. I would sooner see you whipped to heaven than coached to hell. Doubtless many go, like Agag, delicately to their hewing in pieces, while others go sorrowing to eternal glory. You have had losses: what are these but God's rough messengers to tell you that there is noth-

ing beneath the sky worth living for, to wean you from the breasts of earth and cause you to look for something more substantial than worldly riches can afford you? And you, too, have lost friends; may I recall those graves, whose turf is yet so newly laid? May I remind you of children fair and beautiful in your eyes, taken away from you despite your tears? Shall I remind you of the parent who sleeps in Jesus? of a sweet sister who withered like a lily by early consumption? Shall I bring these thoughts back to you? I would not wish to make your wounds bleed afresh, but it is for your good that I bid you hearken to their solemn voice; for they say to you, "Come to your God! Be reconciled to him!" I do not think you ever will come to Jesus, unless the Holy Spirit shall employ trials to bring you. I find that the woman never found her piece of money till she swept the house. The prodigal never came back till he was hungry, and fain would have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat. I only hope that these troubles may be blessed to you. Besides this, you have had your depression of spirit. If I mistake not, I address some who are under such depressions now. You do not know how it is, but nothing is pleasant to you. You went to the theatre last night. You wished you had not: it gave you no joy; and yet you have been as merry there as any, in former times. You go among your companions, and a day's pleasuring, as they call it, has become to you a very painful waste of time. You have lost the zest of life; and I am not sorry for it, if it should make you look for a better life, and trust in a world to come. My friends, again I say, this is the burning of your barley-fields. God has sent for you, and you would not come; and now he has sent messengers who are not so easily refused. He has sent these with sterner and rougher words, which speak to your flesh, if your spirit will not hear.

Well, now, what then? If God is sending these, *are you listening to them?* My hearer, if God has sent these, have you listened to them? There are some of you of whom I almost despair. God can save you, but I cannot tell you how he will

do it. Certainly the Word does not seem likely to be blessed. You have been called and entreated; early and late we have entreated you. Our bowels have yearned with tenderness for you, but hitherto in vain. God knows I have been hammering away at the granite, and it has not yielded yet; I have smitten the flint, and it is not broken. Some of you all but break the ploughshare: you are such rocks that it seems in vain to plough upon you. As for trouble, I do not see that that is likely to do you any good; for if you are smitten again, you will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick already, and the whole heart is faint. You have been beaten, till from the crown of the head to the sole of your foot there is nothing but wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores. You are poor — perhaps your drunkenness has made you so; you have lost your wife — perhaps your cruelty helped to kill her; you have lost your children, and you are left a penniless, friendless, helpless beggar, and yet you will not turn to God! What now is to be done unto you? O Ephraim! what shall I do unto thee? Shall I give thee up? How can I give thee up? "How shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim?" The heart of mercy still yearns after thee. Return thou! return thou! God help thee to return, even now.

Others of you have not suffered all this in the past, but are just now enduring a part of it. Let me entreat you, by the mercies of God and by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye despise not him who speaketh unto you. God doth not continue to send his messengers forever. After he hath labored with you for a time, he will leave you to cursing. Long-suffering lasts not forever. Mercy hath its day. Behold, the King runs up the white flag of comfort to-day, and he invites you to come unto him. To-morrow he may run up the red flag of threatening; and if that answereth not, if that red flag will not make you turn, he will run up the black flag of execution, and then there will be no hope. Beware! The black flag is not run up yet: the red flag is there now in trials and troubles, which

are God's threatenings to you, bidding you open wide your heart that grace may enter; but if it cometh to this that the red flag fail, the black flag must come. Perhaps it has come! God help you with broken heart to cry unto him that you may be saved, before the candle is blown out and the sun is set, and the night of the dead is come on without the hope of another sun rising on a blessed resurrection.

What is the drift of all this? My drift is this: If, now, a word of mine could make you come to the King this morning — I know it will not unless God the Holy Spirit compels you to do so by his irresistible power; but if he would bless it, I would rejoice as one who findeth great spoil. Wherefore do you stand out against God? If the Lord intendeth your eternal salvation, your resistance will be in vain; and how will you vex yourself in after years to think that you should have stood out so long! Wherefore dost thou resist? God's battering-ram is too mighty for the walls of your prejudice: he will make them fall yet. Why dost thou stand out against thy God, against him who loveth thee, who hath loved thee with an everlasting love, and redeemed thee by the blood of Christ? Why standest thou out against him who intends to lead thy captivity captive, and to make thee yet his rejoicing child? "Oh!" saith one, "if I thought there were such mercy as that, I would yield." If thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ, this shall be an evidence that such mercy is ordained for thee. Oh that the Spirit of God would enable thee, sinner, to come just as thou art and put thy trust in Christ! If thou dost so, then it is certain that thy name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life, that thou wast chosen of God and art precious to him, and that thy head is one on which the crown of immortality is to glitter forever. Oh that thou wouldst trust Christ! The joy and peace it works in the present is worth worlds; but oh the glory, the overwhelming glory which in worlds to come shall belong to those that trust in Jesus! God give you this morning to cast your souls upon the finished work of Jesus. His blood can cleanse; his righteousness can

cover; his beauty can adorn; his prayer can preserve; his advent shall glorify; his heaven shall make you blessed. Trust him! God help you to trust him; and he shall have all the praise, both now and forever. Amen and amen.

SERMON VII.

CHRIST IS GLORIOUS: LET US MAKE HIM KNOWN.

"AND HE SHALL STAND AND FEED IN THE STRENGTH OF THE LORD, IN THE MAJESTY OF THE NAME OF THE LORD HIS GOD; AND THEY SHALL ABIDE: FOR NOW SHALL HE BE GREAT UNTO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH."—Micah v. 4.

You have a very vivid idea of the sufferings of Christ. Your faith has seen him sweating great drops of blood in the garden of Gethsemane. You have looked on with amazement while he gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them who plucked off the hair, and hid not his face from shame and spitting. With sorrowful sympathy you have followed him through the streets of Jerusalem, weeping and bewailing him with the women. You have sat down to watch him when he was fastened to the tree: you have wept at his bitter complaint—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and you have rejoiced in his shout of victory—"It is finished!" With Magdalene and Nicodemus, you have followed his dead body to the tomb, and seen it wrapped about with spices, and left to its lonely sleep. Are your perceptions quite as keen concerning the glory which *did* follow and *is* following? Can you see him quite as distinctly when on the third morn the Conqueror rises, bursting the bonds of death with which he could not be holden? Can you as clearly view him ascending up on high, leading captivity captive? Can you hear the ring of angelic clarions, as with dyed garments from Bozrah the Victor returns from the battle, dragging death and hell at his chariot wheels? Do you plainly perceive him as he takes his seat at the right hand of the Father, henceforth expecting until

his enemies be made his footstool? And can you be as clear this morning about the reigning Christ as you have been about the suffering Christ? Lo! my brethren, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, *hath* prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof!" At this hour he goeth forth, riding upon his white horse, conquering and to conquer. Lo! at his girdle swing the keys of heaven and death and hell; for "the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." Behold him, my brethren, in his present plenitude of glory, and endeavor to get as clear a perception of it as you have had of his shame. Not only weep at his burial, but rejoice at his resurrection; not only sorrow at his cross, but worship at his throne. Do not merely think of the nails and of the spear, but behold the imperial purple which hangs so nobly upon his royal shoulders, and of the divine crown which he wears upon his majestic brow.

I want to conduct you in such a frame of mind through the glories of my text. First, bidding you observe *the perpetual reign of Christ:* "He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God;" then I shall beg you to observe that flowing from this is *the perpetual continuance of his church:* "and they shall abide;" and then proceeding both from his continued reign and from the church's consequent perpetual existence comes *the greatness of our King:* "for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth."

I. At the outset, observe carefully THE PERPETUAL REIGN OF CHRIST. He lives; he reigns; he is king over his people.

Notice, first, that his reign is *shepherd-like in its nature.* The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, but our Master washed his disciples' feet. Earthly monarchs are often tyrants: their yoke is heavy, and their language domineering; but it is not so with our King: his yoke is easy, and his burden

is light, for he is meek and lowly of heart. He is a shepherd-king. He has supremacy, but it is the superiority of a wise and tender shepherd over his needy and loving flock; he commands and receives obedience, but it is the willing obedience of the well-cared-for sheep, rendered joyfully to their beloved Shepherd, whose voice they know so well. He rules by the force of love and the energy of goodness. His power lies not in imperious threatenings, but in imperial loving-kindness. Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King, for "men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed." Never people had such a king before. His service is perfect freedom; to be his subject is to be a king; to serve him is to reign. Blessed are the people who are the sheep of his pasture. If they follow in his footsteps, their road is safe; if they sleep at his feet, no lion can disturb their peace; if they are fed from his hand, they shall lie down in green pastures, and know no lack; if they abide close to his person, they shall drink of rivers of delight. Righteousness and peace are the stability of his throne; joy and gladness are the ornaments of his reign. Oh! how happy are we who belong to such a prince! Thou King in Jeshurun, we pay thee homage with loyal hearts; we come into thy presence with thanksgiving, and into thy courts with praise; for thou art our God, and we are the people of thy pasture and the sheep of thy hand.

Notice that the reign of Jesus is *practical in its character.* It is said "he shall stand *and feed.*" The great Head of the church is actively engaged in providing for his people. He does not sit down upon the throne in empty state, or hold a sceptre without wielding it in government. No: he stands and feeds. The expression "feed," in the original, is like an analogous one in the Greek, which means to shepherdize,—to do everything expected of a shepherd,—to guide, to watch, to preserve, to tend, as well as to feed. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the church, is always actively engaged for the church's good. Through him the Spirit of God constantly descends upon the members of the church; by him ministers are given in due season, and all church-

officers in their proper place. When he ascended up on high he received gifts for men; "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Our Lord does not close his eyes to the state of his church. Beloved, he is not a listless spectator of our wants. He is this day standing and feeding his people. They are scattered, I know, wide as the poles asunder; but our mighty Shepherd can see every sheep and lamb of his flock, and he gives them all their portion of meat in due season. He it is that, like a mighty breaker, goes forth at the head of his flock, and they follow where he clears the way: "He shall stand and feed." Oh blessed carefulness and divine activity of our gracious King! always fighting against our enemies, and at the same time shedding his benignant influences upon his friends.

Consider, again, for it is in our text, that this active reign is *continual in its duration.* It is said, "*He shall stand* and feed;" not, "he shall feed now and then, and then leave his position;" not, "he shall one day grant a revival, and then next day leave his church to barrenness." Beloved, there is no such pastor as Christ. "I know my sheep," he can say, in a very high and peculiar sense. He knows them through and through; he feels with them; in all their afflictions he is afflicted; he is one with them eternally. There is no such wakeful watchman as the Lord Jesus. Is it not written, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day"? Those eyes never slumber, and those hands never rest; that heart never ceases to beat with love, and those shoulders are never weary of carrying his people's burdens. The church may go through her dark ages, but Christ is with her in the midnight; she may pass through her fiery furnace, but Christ is in the midst of the flame with her. Her whole history through, wherever you find the church, there shall you find the church's Lord. The head is never severed from the body, nor is the watchful care of this gracious husband towards his spouse suspended for an instant.

I beseech you, labor to realize the noble picture. Here are his sheep in these pastures this morning, and here is our great Shepherd, with the crown upon his head, standing and feeding us all; nay, not *us* all alone, but dispensing his tender mercies to all the multitudes of his elect throughout the whole world. He is at this moment King in Zion, ruling and overruling, present everywhere, and everywhere showing himself strong in the defence of his saints. I would that our churches could be more influenced by a belief in the abiding power, presence, and pre-eminence of their living and reigning Lord. He is no dead King, whose memory we are bidden to embalm, but a living Leader and Commander, whose behests we must obey, whose honor we must defend.

Do not fail to discern that the empire of Christ in his church is *effectually powerful in its action:* "He shall feed in the strength of Jehovah." Wherever Christ is, there is God; and whatever Christ does is the act of the Most High. Oh! it is a joyful truth to consider that he who redeemed us was none other than God himself, he who led our captivity captive was Jehovah-Jesus; he who stands to-day representing the interests of his people is very God of very God; he who has sworn that every one of his people whom he hath redeemed by blood shall be brought safe to his Father's right hand, is himself essential Deity. O my brethren, we rest upon a sure foundation when we build upon the Incarnate God; and O ye saints of God, the interests of each one of you, and of the one great church, must be safe, because our champion is God. Jehovah is our Judge, Jehovah is our Lawgiver, Jehovah is our King: he will save us. How can he fail or be discouraged? When he maketh bare his arm, who shall stand against him? Let us rehearse the mighty deeds of the Lord, and tell of his wonders of old. Remember how he got him victory upon Pharaoh and the pride of Egypt! Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?" Ten plagues of terrible majesty taught the boaster that the Lord was not to be despised, and the humbled tyrant bade the people go their way. With a high hand and an outstretched

arm did the Lord bring forth his people from the house of bondage. When the proud high stomach of Egypt's king again rose against the Most High, the Lord knew how to lay his adversary lower than the dust. Methinks I see the hosts of Mizraim, with their horses and their chariots, hurrying after the Lord's fugitives. Their mouths are foaming with rage. "The enemy said I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil: my lust shall be satisfied upon them." See how they ride, in all their pompous glory, swallowing the earth in their fury! O Israel! where shall be thy defence? How shalt thou escape from thy tyrannic master? Be still, O ye seed of Jacob: ye sons of Abraham, rest ye patiently; for these Egyptians, whom ye see to-day, ye shall see no more forever. With their horses and their chariots the fierce foemen descended into the depths of the sea, but the Lord looked upon them and troubled them. "Thou didst blow with thy wind: the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters." The depths have covered them; they sank into the bottom like a stone. "Let us sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." Surely it shall be so at the last with Jesus our King and all his saints; we also shall sing "the song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb," in that day when the arch-enemy shall be overthrown, and the hosts of evil shall be consumed, and they who hate the Lord shall become as the fat of rams: into smoke shall they consume, yea, into smoke shall they consume away.

One other word remains,—our Lord's kingdom *is most majestic in its aspect.* You will observe it is written by the prophet, "He shall feed in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God." Jesus Christ is greatly to be reverenced. The familiarity with which we approach him is always to be tempered with the deepest and most reverent adoration. He is our brother, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, but still he counteth it not robbery to be equal with God. I know he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and he calleth himself to-day our husband, and maketh us to be members of his body,

of his flesh, and of his bones; but yet we must never forget that it is written, "Let all the angels of God worship him." and "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth: and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Yes, Christ is majestic in his church. I would, brethren, we always thought of this. There is a glory and a majesty about all the laws of Christ and all his commands, so that whether we baptize at his command, or break bread in remembrance of him, or lift up his cross in ministry — in whatever we do, in his name, which is, in fact, what he does through us, there in an attendant majesty which should make our minds feel perpetually reverent before him. Oh that the world could see the glory of Christ in the church! Oh that the world did but know who it is that is in the midst of the few, the feeble, the weak, the foolish, as they call them! O Philistia! if thou didst but know who is our champion, thy Goliath of Gath would soon hide his diminished head. O Assyria! if thou didst but know that the ancient might of him who smote Sennacherib still abideth with us, thy hosts would turn their backs, and yield us an easy victory. There is a true and mysterious presence of Christ with his people, according to the promise "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." It is because the world ignores this that she despises and sneers at the church of God. Therein is our comfort and our glory. We have a majesty about us, if we be the people of God, which is not to be gainsayed, — angels see it and wonder, — a majesty of indwelling Godhead; for the Lord is in the midst of us for a glory, and around us for a defence.

II. We will now occupy one or two minutes with THE CONSEQUENT PERPETUITY OF THE CHURCH. Because of the unseen but most certain presence of Christ as King in the midst of his people, his church ABIDES: so says the text. Here reflect, first, that a church *exists*. What a wonder this! It is perhaps the greatest miracle of all ages that God has a church in the world.

You who are conversant with human history will bear me out when I say that the whole history of the church is a series of miracles —a long stream of wonders. A little spark kindled in the midst of oceans, and yet all her boisterous waves cannot quench it. Here is the great wonder which John saw in vision, and which history reveals in solemn, sober fact. A woman, "being with child, cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon . . . . . stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born." The man-child who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron, was brought forth and caught up to God and to his throne. As for the woman, the church, she fled as on eagles' wings to her wilderness-shelter prepared of God, until, in great wrath, the dragon pursued and persecuted her. Apt enough is that metaphor, "The serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood . . . . . And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Yet, my brethren, as surely as that glorious man-child, the Lord Jesus, lives and sits upon the throne, so surely shall the woman, the poor afflicted church, live on until the dragon's time is over, and the King shall reign upon the earth.

To what trials, my brethren, has not the church of God been subjected! What new invention can Satan bring forth? The fire, the rack, imprisonment, banishment, confiscation, slander, — all these have been tried; and in them all the church has been more than conqueror, through Him who loved her. False doctrine without, heresy and schism within, hypocrisy, formalism, fanaticism, pretences of high spirituality, worldliness,—these have all done their worst. I marvel at the wondrous ingenuity of the great enemy of the church; but methinks his devices must nearly have come to an end. Can he invent anything further? We have been astounded in these ages by the prodigy of an infidel bishop; we have been struck dumb with sorrow and amazement

at a decree which declares that a church professing to be a church of Christ must permit men to be her ministers who deny the inspiration of Holy Scripture! This is a new thing under the sun. Popery and infidelity are to be both legalized and fostered in a church professing to be Christian and Protestant. What next? and what next? But what of all this? *The* church — I mean the company of the Lord's called and faithful and chosen — still exists. The Lord has his elect people, who still hold forth the Word of truth; and in the most reprobate church still he may say, "I have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy."

Observe, the text says "she abides;" which means not that she exists now and then, by starts and spasms, but *she exists always*. This is wonderful. Always a church! When the full force of the Pagan emperors came like a thundering avalanche upon her, she shook off the stupendous load as a man shaketh the flakes of snow from his garment, and she lived on uninjured. When papal Rome vented its malice yet more furiously and ingeniously; when cruel murderers hunted the saints among the Alps, or worried them in the low country; when Albigenses and Waldenses poured out their blood in rivers, and dyed the snow with crimson, she lived still, and never was in a healthier state than when she was immersed in her own gore. When, after a partial reformation in this country, the pretenders to religion determined that the truly spiritual should be harried out of the land, God's church did not sleep or suspend her career of life or service. Let the covenant signed in blood witness to the vigor of the persecuted saints. Hearken to her psalm amidst the brown heath-clad hills of Scotland, and her prayer in the secret conventicles of England! Hear ye the voice of Cargil and Cameron thundering among the mountains against a false king and an apostate people! Hear ye the testimony of Bunyan and his compeers, who would sooner rot in dungeons than bow the knee to Baal! Ask me, "Where is the church?" and I can find her at any and every period, from the day when first, in the upper

room the Holy Ghost came down, even until now. In one unbroken line our apostolic succession runs ; not through the Church of Rome ; not from the superstitious hands of priest-made popes or king-created bishops (what a varnished lie is the apostolic succession of those who boast so proudly of it!), but through the blood of good men and true, who never forsook the testimony of Jesus : through the loins of true pastors, laborious evangelists, faithful martyrs, and honorable men of God, we trace our pedigree, up to the fishermen of Galilee ; and glory that we perpetuate by God's grace that true and faithful church of the living God, in whom Christ did abide and will abide until the world's crash.

Observe, dear friends, that in the use of the term "*abide*" we have not only existence, and continued existence, but the idea of *quiet, calm, uninjured duration.* It does not say she lingers, — hunted, tempted, worried, — but she abides. Oh the calmness of the church of God under the attacks of her most malicious foes! Thou cruel adversary, the virgin daughter of Zion hath shaken her head at thee and laughed thee to scorn! She abides in peace when the world rages against her. It is most noteworthy how in most instances the church of God still keeps her foothold where she has been most savagely persecuted. In modern times we find in Madagascar, after years of exterminating persecution, the church of God rises from her ashes, like the phœnix from the flames. The chief wonder is that she abides perfect. Not one of God's elect has gone back ; not one of the blood-bought has denied the faith. Not one single soul which ever was effectually called can be made to deny Christ, even though his flesh should be pulled from his bones by hot pincers, or his tormented body flung to the jaws of wild beasts. All that the enemy has done has been of no avail against the church. The old rock has been washed, and washed, and washed again by stormy waves, and submerged a thousand times in the floods of tempest, but even her angles and corners abide unaltered and unalterable. We may say of the Lord's tabernacle, not one of the stakes thereof has been removed, nor one of her cords

been broken. The house of the Lord, from foundation to pinnacle, is perfect still. "The rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell not;" nay, nor a single stone of it, "for it was founded upon a Rock."

But why all this, dear friends? — why is it that we have seen the church endure to this day? How is it that we are confident that even should worse times arrive the church would weather the storm, and abide till moons shall cease to wax and wane? Why this security? Only because Christ is in the midst of her. You do not believe, I hope, in the preservation of orthodoxy by legal instruments and trust deeds. This is what too many Dissenters have relied upon. We certainly cannot depend upon creeds: they are good enough in their way, as trust deeds are too, but they are as broken reeds if we rely upon them. We cannot depend upon parliament, nor kings, nor queens. We may draw up the most express and distinct form of doctrine, but we shall find that the next generation will depart from the truth unless God shall be pleased to give it renewed grace from on high. You cannot, by Presbytery, or Independency, or Episcopacy, secure the life of the church. I find the church of God has existed under an Episcopacy – a form of government not without its virtues and its faults. I find the church of God flourish under a Presbytery, and decay under it too. I know it can be successful under an Independent form of church government, and can decline into Arianism quite as easily. The fact is that forms of government have very little to do with the vital principle of the church. The reason why the church of God exists, is not her ecclesiastical regulations, her organization, her formularies, her ministers, or her creeds, but the presence of the Lord in the midst of her; and while Christ lives, and Christ reigns, and stands and feeds his church, she is safe; but if he were once gone, it would be with her as it is with you and with me when the Spirit of God has departed from us, — we are weak as other men, and she would be quite as powerless.

III. But, now, thirdly, flowing from both these, from the per-

petual presence of Christ, and from the continued existence of his church, is THE GREATNESS OF OUR KING. *"Now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth."* Christ is great in his church; oh! how great in our hearts, where he reigns supreme! My heart, it doth leap at the sound of his name —

> "Jesus, the very thought of thee
> With rapture fills my breast."

Oh for crowns! for golden crowns! Let us crown him King in Zion! Oh for a well-tuned harp, and for David's feet to dance before the ark at the very mention of Jesus' name! Now shall he be great indeed in our hearts! But he is to be great to the ends of the earth. That is a promise of which we will say, it is *accomplished in a measure even now.* Christ is made great in the conversion of every sinner. When the suppliant penitent cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and the peace-speaking blood comes dropping upon the troubled conscience, and the soul bows meekly to accept the finished righteousness, then is Christ great. And he is great in the consecration of every one of his blood-bought saints. When they live for him; when in their prayers they make mention of him; when they give him their heart's music, their life's light, and their lips' testimony; when they feel that tribulation is joyous if endured for him, and the sternest toil a dear delight when undertaken for his sake — then Christ is great. Think, my brethren, this morning, how many ships are now furrowing the blue sea in which there are hearts which love the name of Jesus. Hark! Across the waves of the Atlantic and the Pacific I hear the sound of prayer and praise from many a vessel bearing the British flag. From many an islet of the sea the song is borne upon the breeze. And there across the waters, in the land of our American brethren, now so sadly chastened with war, multitudes of hearts beat as high as ours at the mention of the Saviour's name. Here across yon narrow channel, in Holland, in Sweden, in Germany, in Switzerland, and even in France and Italy, how many own his name and praise him this day! We speak

of our Queen's dominions, and say that the sun never sets upon them. We may in truth say this of our Lord Jesus. Men of all colors trust in his blood: they who look upward to the southern cross, and they who follow the polar star, alike worship his dear name; and when England ceases her strain of joy, in the hush of night, Australia takes up the song; and so from land to land, and from shore to shore, a sacrifice of a pure offering is brought to his shrine. It is accomplished, in some degree; but oh how small the degree when we think of the thick darkness which covers the multitude of the people!

Again, it is a promise which is *guaranteed as to its fulfilment in the fullest sense.* Courage, brethren! courage! The night is not forever: the morning cometh! Watchman, what sayest thou? Are there not streaks reddening the east? Hath not the God of day, the Lord Jesus, begun to shoot his divine arrows of light upwards into the thick darkness? It is even so. As I think of the signs of the times, I would fondly hope that we shall live to see brighter and better days. "*Now*," says the text, "shall he be great unto the ends of the earth." Prophet, I would that thy "now" were true this day. Now, even now, let him reign! Why doth he tarry? Why are his chariots so long in coming? Will it be, my brethren, that Christ will come before the world is converted? If so, welcome, Jesus. Or will the world be converted first? If so, thrice welcome the mercy. But, whether or no, this we do know, — he shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river even unto the ends of the earth. They who dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust. The day shall come when the fifth great monarchy shall be co-extensive with the world's bounds, and everywhere the Great Shepherd shall reign.

But remember, dear friends, that while this promise is thus guaranteed as to its fulfilment, it is to be *prayed for as to its accomplishment.* "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." The mountain of the Lord shall rise in the latter days; but, mark you, though there be no sound of trowel or a hammer, there will be heard the sound of prayer

and praise, as upward the mountain of God's house shall ascend. You know the picture. The prophet had seen the Lord's house standing, as it were, in a valley ; and as he looked upon it, presently it became a little hill : the ground began to heave ; by and by it had swollen from a little hill into a lofty mountain ; and up it rose, and grew more great before his eyes, till Alps were dwarfed and Himalayas were stunted ; and up it still went, not the house only, but the mountain too, till, infinitely higher than the projected tower of Babel, which man meant to be the world's centre, this house stood out clear and sharp above the clouds, having pinnacles high up in God's heaven, and yet deep foundations in man's earth, and all nations began to flow to it as to the great centre. What a dream ! What a vision ! Yet such shall it be. The church is, as it were, in a plain just now : she begins to rise. Oh stupendous movement ! she begins to rise ; her mountains swell and grow ; she attracts observers ; she cannot be held down. Who can attempt to restrain the swelling mass ? Who shall prevent the gigantic birth ? Up rises the mountain, as though swollen by some inward fire, and up it swells, and swells, and swells, till earth touches heaven, and God communes with men. Then shall be heard the great hallelujah, "The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them."

But then, — and this is the conclusion, and I hope God may help me to press it on your hearts, — *all this is to be labored for* as well as prayed after. My soul pants and pines to see Christ glorious in the eyes of men. Lives there a Christian here with soul so dead that he does not desire the extension of his Master's kingdom ? Sirs, is there one among you who counts it little to see Jesus Christ lifted up in men's hearts ? I know I speak to a people — and the Lord knoweth it — to many of whom Christ is the dearest of all which is beloved, — the fairest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. Now, if Christ is to be glorified, he must be glorified by you ; if his kingdom is to come, it must come through you. God works, but God works by means. He worketh in you "to will and to do of his own

good pleasure." Souls are to be saved, but they are not saved without instruments. The feast is to be furnished with guests, but you are to go into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in. I know my Master is to have many crowns, but they are to be crowns for which you have fought, which you have won through his grace, and which you place at his feet, that he may honor you by wearing them upon his brow. Now we, as a people, have been greatly blessed and helped of God, and I believe the Master has a very high claim upon us. We, above all the churches in the world, are indebted to the grace and mercy of God; and we ought to be doing something for the extension of the Saviour's kingdom. We cannot boast of wealth; we cannot profess to build all over London a multitude of churches as the bishop hopes to do. Any scheme of raising three millions of money by us must be looked upon as being entirely a dream. We cannot attempt such a thing. If London is to be converted by money, we must give up the task. We have no mitred bishops, no queens to subscribe, and no nobles and dukes and the like to add their thousands and their tens of thousands of pounds. We are a feeble folk; what then can we do for God? Why do as much as the strong! What can we do for God? Do as much as the mighty! Nay, my brethren, our very weakness and want of power shall be our adaptation to God's work; and he who often putteth by the sword of Saul, and the armor of the son of Kish, will use David, and his sling and his stone, and smite Goliath's brow therewith.

I have been musing all this week upon that celebrated scene in ancient history, which seems to me to be so much like the state of our church just now, — the story of Gideon, the son of Joash, threshing wheat in the winepress, because he was afraid to be seen; the Midianites having spoiled the land. Now we, as Baptists, have generally been too much afraid to be seen. We have threshed our corn somewhere away in the winepress — up a back court — down a narrow street; any dirty hole would do to build a chapel in. So long as people could not find it, the site was thought advantageous; and if nobody could ever see it, that

was the place for our fathers, and for some who still linger among us. It was threshing wheat in the winepress, to hide it from the enemy. Well, now, I think the time has come that we should not be afraid of these Midianites any longer. Long has the church of God been oppressed and kept back ; she has been content to let the world devour her increase. There have been few additions to the churches : they remain very much what they were twenty or thirty years ago ; but, my brethren, some of us think that we have seen our fleece wet with dew, while all around was dry ; and we believe the Lord has said to us, " The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor." We think we have had the Lord's commission, " Go in this thy strength." We do not expect all of you to go with us, for the people are too many. We expect that there are many of the trembling and faint-hearted who will step back from the battle, — men who are looking for their families, and must provide for them ; men who are saving up money, and grudge their sovereigns, and so on. These of course will stand back ; and let them : such men encumber our march. We fear that you are not all men who lap ; but we have a few who care very little for the ease and repose of life, but who snatch a hasty draught as they run, and with heat and zeal and passionate earnestness run to meet the adversary. Now, these we expect to go with us to the fray. In the name of the Lord, I proclaim a new crusade against the sin and vice of this huge city. What are we to do ? The hosts of Midian are to be counted by millions. Here in this great city we have three millions of people ; and what if I were to say two-and-half millions of them do not know their right hand from their left in matters of religion, I believe I should speak too charitably ; for if I could believe there were half a million of true believers in London, I should have vastly greater hopes of it than I have now. But, alas ! that is not the case. Millions, millions are gathered in the valley of indecision who are not upon the Lord's side. What can you and I do ? We can do nothing of ourselves, but we can do everything by the help of our God. Where Christ is there is might, and where God is there is strength Let

us, therefore, in God's name, determine to plant new churches wherever openings occur. Like Gideon's men, let us rally under our church officers, and follow where a warm heart leads the way. Gideon took his men, and bade them do two things, — covering up a torch in an earthern pitcher, he bade them, at an appointed signal, break the pitcher and let the light shine; and then sound with their trumpets, crying, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon! the sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" This is just what all Christians must do. First, *you must shine*, break the pitcher which conceals you; throw aside the bushel which has been hiding your candle, and shine. Let your light shine before men; let your good works be such, that, when they look upon you, they shall know that you have been with Jesus. There is much good done by the shining. Then *there must be the sound* — the blowing of the trumpet. Oh, dear friends! the great mass of London will never hear the gospel unless you go and blow the trumpet in their ears. Many who are members of this church never heard a gospel sermon until they heard some of you preaching in the street. "Why," said one, "I never went to a place of worship; but I went down a street, and there stood a young man at the corner. I listened to him, and God was pleased to send the arrow to my conscience, and I came into the house of God afterwards." Take the gospel to them; carry it to their doors; put it in their way; do not suffer them to escape it; blow the trumpet right against their ears. In the name of God, I pray you do this. Remember that the true war-cry of the church is Gideon's war-cry, "*The sword of the Lord!*" God must do it: it is God's work. But we are not to be idle: instrumentality is to be used, "The sword of the Lord *and of Gideon!*" Mark you, if we only cry "The sword of the Lord!" we shall be guilty of an idle presumption, and shall be tempting God to depart from his fixed rule of procedure. This is the cry of every lazy lie-a-bed. What good ever comes of saying, "The Lord will do his own work: let us sit still?" Nor must it be "The sword of Gideon" alone, for that were idolatrous reliance on an arm of flesh;

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we can do nothing of ourselves. Not "The sword of the Lord" only: that were idleness; but the two together. "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Oh my brethren! God help you to learn this lesson well; and then you will go forth shining and sounding, living and teaching, testifying and living out the truth. Ye shall most assuredly make the kingdom of Christ to come, and his name shall be honored if you will do this. It seems to me that now is a glorious opportunity. There is a spirit of hearing upon the people. Almost any one may get a hearing who is willing to preach Christ. Now or never! Sons of Jacob! ye are to be like a lion among the flock of sheep! and will ye lie down and slumber? Up! and every man to the prey! Sons of Jacob! ye are to be as dew upon the grass! and will ye tarry for men and wait for the sons of men? No. In God's name, go forward, and let something be done for God, and for his Christ, for a perishing age, for a dark world, for heaven's glory, and for hell's defeat. Up! ye who know the Lord, ye swordsmen of our Israel, — up and at them; and God give you a great victory and deliverance!

I want you to make some practical point of these things today. God has been pleased to put a sword into my hand, and to give me my lamp and my pitcher; my college of young men is now become in the Lord's hands a marvellous power for good. A blessing greater than I could have expected rests on this work We are continually sending them out, and God owns them in the conversion of souls. I have never seen any agency more blessed to the conversion of souls than the agency of our college. Without saying anything to depreciate other efforts, I do believe God has conferred on our institution a crowning and special blessing, and will continue to do so yet more and more. I want you all, both hearers and readers of my sermons, to feel that this is your work, and to help me in it while I continue to cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" God works, and therefore we work; God is with us, and therefore we are with God, and stand on his side. Inasmuch as many of these men raise churches, we want you to help to build the places where the new congre-

gations can be accommodated afterwards; and to that end we have striven to raise a fund of five thousand pounds, to be lent out to these new churches on loan to be repaid by instalments without interest. It is but a small sum, but it is as much as I think we can do, and frugal care will turn it to good account. Some three thousand pounds have been promised by our seven shepherds and principal men; but there are many who have not promised anything yet, and we shall be glad if they will come forward, for otherwise this useful fund cannot be raised. When this is done with, once for all, we will go on and do something else for Jesus. Do break this pitcher; get this done, and let the light of this thing shine. We must be doing something for God. I speak to you now upon the practical point, and come to it at once. If *you* are content to live without serving God, *I* am not; and if you are willing to let these hours roll by without doing something to extend the kingdom of Jesus, let me be gone from you; let me be gone from you to those of warmer spirits and of holier aspirations; for I must fight for God! there must be victories won for him! We must extend the range of the gospel; we must find places where souls can be brought to hear the Word. Hell shall not forever laugh at our inactivity, and heaven shall not eternally weep at our sloth! Let us be up and doing, and let this thing be done by the many: the few have already done their parts. Promises reaching over five years are asked of you; you can all do something. And then, every one of you, when you have done your share in this, go out personally and serve with your flaming torch of holy example, and with your trumpet-tones of earnest declaration and testimony, serve your Lord; and God shall be with you, and Midian shall be put to confusion, and the Lord of hosts shall reign for ever and ever. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Hear ye that note, oh dead souls, and live!

SERMON VIII.

ENDURING TO THE END.

"HE THAT ENDURETH TO THE END SHALL BE SAVED." — Matthew x 22.

THIS particular text was originally addressed *to the apostles* when they were sent to teach and preach in the name of the Lord Jesus. Perhaps bright visions floated before their minds, of honor and esteem among men. It was no mean dignity to be among the first twelve heralds of salvation to the sons of Adam. Was a check needed to their high hopes? Perhaps so. Lest they should enter upon their work without having counted its cost, Christ gives them a very full description of the treatment which they might expect to receive, and reminds them that it was not the commencement of their ministry which would win them their reward, but "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." It would be well if every youthful aspirant to the gospel ministry would remember this. If merely to put our hand to the plough proved us to be called of God, how many would be found so; but, alas! too many look back and prove unworthy of the kingdom. The charge of Paul to Timothy is a very necessary exhortation to every young minister: "Be thou faithful unto death." It is not to be faithful for a time, but to be "faithful *unto death*," which will enable a man to say, "I have fought a good fight." How many dangers surround the Christian minister! As the officers in an army are the chosen targets of the sharpshooters, so are the ministers of Christ. The king of Syria said to his servants, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel;" even so the arch-

fiend makes his main attack upon the ministers of God. From the first moment of his call to the work, the preacher of the Word will be familiar with temptation. While he is yet in his youth, there are multitudes of the softer temptations to turn the head and trip the feet of the youthful herald of the cross; and when the blandishments of early popularity have passed away as soon they must, the harsh croak of slander and the adder's tongue of ingratitude assail him; he finds himself stale and flat where once he was flattered and admired; nay, the venom of malice succeeds to the honeyed morsels of adulation. Now, let him gird his loins and fight the good fight of faith. In his after days, to provide fresh matter Sabbath after Sabbath, to rule as in the sight of God, to watch over the souls of men, to weep with them who weep, to rejoice with those who do rejoice, to be a nursing father unto young converts, sternly to rebuke hypocrites, to deal faithfully with backsliders, to speak with solemn authority and paternal pathos to those who are in the first stages of spiritual decline, to carry about with him the care of the souls of hundreds, is enough to make him grow old while yet he is young, and to mar his visage with the lines of grief, till, like the Saviour at the age of thirty years, men shall count him nearly fifty. "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" said the adversaries of Christ to him when he was but thirty-two. If the minister should fall, my brethren; if, set upon a pinnacle, he should be cast down; if, standing in slippery places, he should falter; if the standard-bearer fall, as fall full well he may, what mischief is done to the church! — what shouts are heard among the adversaries! — what dancings are seen among the daughters of Philistia! How hath God's banner been stained in the dust, and the name of Jesus cast into the mire! When the minister of Christ turns traitor, it is as if the pillars of the house did tremble; every stone in the structure feels the shock. If Satan can succeed in overturning the preachers of the Word, it is as if yon broad-spreading tree should suddenly fall beneath the axe. Prone in the dust it lies to wither and to rot; but where are the birds of the air which made their nests among its boughs, and

whither fly those beasts of the field which found a happy shadow beneath its branches? Dismay hath seized them, and they flee in affright. All who were comforted by the preacher's word, strengthened by his example, and edified by his teaching, are filled with humiliation and grief; crying, "Alas! my brother." By these our manifold dangers and weighty responsibilities we may very justly appeal to you who feed under our ministry, and beseech you, "Brethren, pray for us." Well, we know that though our ministry be received of the Lord Jesus, if hitherto we have been kept faithful by the power of the Holy Ghost, yet it is only he who endureth to the end who shall be saved.

But, my brethren, how glorious is the sight of the man who does endure to the end as a minister of Christ! I have photographed upon my heart just now the portrait of one very, very dear to me; and I think I may venture to produce a rough sketch of him, as no mean example of how honorable it is to endure to the end. This man began while yet a youth to preach the Word. Sprung of ancestors who had loved the Lord and served his church, he felt the glow of holy enthusiasm. Having proved his capabilities, he entered college, and, after the close of its course, settled in a spot where for more than fifty years he continued his labors. In his early days, his sober earnestness and sound doctrine were owned of God in many conversions, both at home and abroad. Assailed by slander and abuse, it was his privilege to live it all down. He outlived his enemies; and though he had buried a generation of his friends, yet he found many warm hearts clustering round him to the last. Visiting his flock, preaching in his own pulpit, and making very many journeys to other churches, years followed one another so rapidly that he found himself the head of a large tribe of children and grandchildren, most of them walking in the truth. At the age of fourscore years he preached on still, until, laden with infirmities, but yet as joyful and as cheerful as in the heyday of his youth, his time had come to die. He was able to say, truthfully, when last he spake to me, "I do not know that my testimony for God has ever altered, as to the fundamental doctrines. I have grown in

experience, but, from the first day until now, I have had no new doctrines to teach my hearers. I have had to make no confessions of error on vital points, but have been held fast to the doctrines of grace, and can now say that I love them better than ever." Such an one was he, as Paul, the aged, longing to preach so long as his tottering knees could bear him to the pulpit. I am thankful that I had such a grandsire. He fell asleep in Christ but a few hours ago, and on his dying-bed talked as cheerfully as men can do in the full vigor of their health. Most sweetly he talked of the preciousness of Christ, and chiefly of the security of the believer; the truthfulness of the promise; the immutability of the covenant; the faithfulness of God, and the infallibility of the divine decree. Among other things which he said at the last was this; which is, we think, worth your treasuring in your memories. "Dr. Watts sings —

> 'Firm *as the earth* thy gospel stands,
> My Lord, my hope, my trust.'

What, Doctor! is it not firmer than that? Could you not find a better comparison? Why! the earth will give way beneath our feet one day or another, if we rest on it. The comparison will not do. The Doctor was much nearer the mark when he said —

> 'Firm *as his throne* his promise stands,
> And he can well secure
> What I've committed to his hands,
> 'Till the decisive hour.'"

"Firm as his throne," said he; "he must cease to be king before he can break his promise or lose his people. Divine sovereignty makes us all secure." He fell asleep right quietly; for his day was over, and the night was come: what could he do better than go to rest in Jesus? Would God it may be our lot to preach the Word so long as we breathe, standing fast unto the end in the truth of God; and if we see not our sons and grandsons testifying to those doctrines which are so dear to us, yet may we see our children walking in the truth. I know of

nothing, dear friends, which I would choose to have, as the subject of my ambition for life, than to be kept faithful to my God to death, — still to be a soul-winner, still to be a true herald of the cross, and testify the name of Jesus to the last hour. It is only such who in the ministry shall be saved.

Our text, however, occurs again in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, at the fourteenth verse, upon which occasion it was not addressed to the apostles, but to the disciples. The disciples, looking upon the huge stones which were used in the construction of the Temple, admired the edifice greatly, and expected their Lord to utter a few words of passing encomium; instead of which, he, who came not to be an admirer of architecture, but to hew living stones out of the quarry of nature, to build them up into a spiritual temple, turned their remarks to practical account, by warning them of a time of affliction, in which there should be such trouble as had never been before; and he added, "No, nor ever shall be." He described false prophets as abounding, and the love of many as waxing cold, and warned them that "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." So that this solemn truth applies to every one of you.

The Christian man, though not called to the post of danger in witnessing publicly of the grace of God, is destined in his measure to testify concerning Jesus, and in his proper sphere and place to be a burning and a shining light. He may not have the cares of a church, but he hath far more, the cares of business; he is mixed up with the world; he is compelled to associate with the ungodly. To a great degree, he must, at least six days in the week, walk in an atmosphere uncongenial with his nature; he is compelled to hear words which will never provoke him to love and good works, and to behold actions whose example is obnoxious. He is exposed to temptations of every sort and size, for this is the lot of the followers of the Lamb. Satan knows how useful is a consistent follower of the Saviour, and how much damage to Christ's cause an inconsistent professor may bring; and therefore he emptieth out all his arrows from his quiver that he may wound, even unto death, the soldier of

the cross. My brethren, many of you have had a far longer experience than myself. You know how stern is the battle of the religious life, — how you must contend, even unto blood, striving against sin. Your life is one continued scene of warfare, both without and within. Perhaps even now you are crying with the apostle, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" A Christian's career is always fighting, never ceasing; always ploughing the stormy sea, and never resting till he reaches the port of glory. If my God shall preserve you, as preserve you he must, or else you are not his — if he shall keep you, as keep you he will, if you have committed your souls to his faithful guardianship, what an honor awaits you! I have in my mind's eye, just now, one who has been for about sixty years associated with this church, and who this week, full of years, and ripe for heaven, was carried by angels into the Saviour's bosom. Called by divine grace, while yet young, he was united with the Christian church early in life. By divine grace he was enabled to maintain a consistent and honorable character for many years; as an officer of this church he was acceptable among his brethren, and useful both by his godly example and sound judgment; while in various parts of the church of Christ he earned unto himself a good degree. He went last Sabbath-day twice to the house of God where he was accustomed of late years to worship, enjoying the Word, and feasting at the communion-table with much delight. He went to his bed without having any very serious illness upon him, having spent his last evening upon earth in cheerful conversation with his daughters. Ere the morning light, with his head leaning upon his hand, he had fallen asleep in Christ, having been admitted to the rest which remaineth for the people of God. As I think of my brother, though of late years I have seen but little of him, I can but rejoice in the grace which illuminated his pathway. When I saw him, the week before his departure, although full of years, there was little or no failure in mind. He was just the picture of an aged saint waiting for his Master, and willing to work in his cause while life remained. I refer, as most of you know, to Mr. Samuel Gale.

Let us thank God and take courage — thank God that he has preserved in this case a Christian so many, many years; and take courage to hope that there will be found in this church many, at all periods, whose gray heads shall be crowns of glory. "He that endureth to the end," and only he, "shall be saved."

But, dear friends, perseverance is not the lot of the few; it is not left to laborious preachers of the Word, or to consistent church officers: it is the common lot of every believer in the church. It must be so; for only thus can they prove that they are believers. It must be so, for only by their perseverance can the promise be fulfilled, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Without perseverance they cannot be saved; and, as saved they must be, persevere they shall through divine grace.

I shall now, with brevity and earnestness, as God enables me, speak upon our text thus: *Perseverance is the badge of saints — the target of our foes — the glory of Christ — and the care of all believers.*

I. First, then, PERSEVERANCE IS THE BADGE OF TRUE SAINTS. *It is their scriptural mark.* How am I to know a Christian? By his words? Well, to some degree words betray the man; but a man's speech is not always the copy of his heart, for with smooth language many are able to deceive. What doth our Lord say? "Ye shall know them *by their fruits.*" But how am I to know a man's fruits? By watching him one day? I may, perhaps, form a guess of his character by being with him for a single hour; but I could not confidently pronounce upon a man's true state even by being with him for a week. George Whitefield was asked what he thought of a certain person's character. "I have never lived with him," was his very proper answer. If we take the run of a man's life, say for ten, twenty, or thirty years, and if, by carefully watching, we see that he brings forth the fruits of grace through the Holy Spirit, our conclusion may be drawn very safely. As the truly magnetized needle in the compass, with many deflections, yet does really

and naturally point to the pole, so, if I can see that despite infirmities, my friend sincerely and constantly aims at holiness, then I may conclude, with something like certainty, that he is a child of God. Although works do not justify a man before God, they do justify a man's profession before his fellows. I cannot tell whether you are justified in calling yourself a Christian except by your works; by your works, therefore, as James saith, shall ye be justified. You cannot by your words convince me that you are a Christian, much less by your experience, which I cannot see, but must take on trust from you; but your actions will, unless you be an unmitigated hypocrite, speak the truth, and speak the truth loudly too. If your course is as the shining light which shineth more unto the perfect day, I know that yours is the path of the just. All other conclusions are only the judgment of charity such as we are bound to exercise; but this is as far as man can get it, the judgment of certainty when a man's life has been consistent throughout.

Moreover, *analogy shows us that it is perseverance which must mark the Christian.* How do I know the winner at the foot-race? There are the spectators, and there are the runners What strong men! what magnificent muscles! what thews and sinews! Yonder is the goal; and there it is that I must judge who is the winner: not here, at the starting-point; for "They which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize." I may select this one, or that other person, as likely to win, but I cannot be absolutely sure until the race is over. There they fly! See how they press forward, with straining muscles! But one has tripped, another faints, a third is out of breath, and others are far behind. One only wins — and who is he? Why, he who continued to the end. So I may gather from the analogy, which Paul constantly allows us, from the ancient games, that only he who continueth till he reaches the goal may be accounted a Christian at all. A ship starts on a voyage to Australia: if it stops at Madeira, or returns after reaching the Cape, would you consider that it ought to be called an emigrant ship for New South Wales? It must go the whole voyage, or it does not

deserve the name. A man has begun to build a house, and has erected one side of it: do you consider him a builder if he stops there, and fails to cover it in or to finish the other walls? Do we give men praise for being warriors because they know how to make one desperate charge, but lose the campaign? Have we not, of late, smiled at the boasting despatches of commanders, in fights where both combatants fought with valor, and yet neither of them had the common sense to push on to reap the victory? What was the very strength of Wellington, but that, when a triumph had been achieved, he knew how to reap the harvest which had been sown in blood? And he only is a true conqueror, and shall be crowned at the last, who continueth till war's trumpet is blown no more. It is with a Christian as it was with the great Napoleon: he said, "Conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me." So, under God, conquest has made you what you are, and conquest must sustain you. Your motto must be, "Excelsior;" or, if it be not, you know not the noble spirit of God's princes. But why do I multiply illustrations, when all the world rings with the praise of perseverance?

Moreover, *the common-sense judgment of mankind* tells us that those who merely begin, and do not hold out, will not be saved. Why! *if every man would be saved who began to follow Christ, who would be damned?* In such a country as this, the most of men have at least one religious spasm in their lives. I suppose that there is not a person before me who at some time or other did not determine to be a pilgrim. You, Mr. Pliable, were induced by a Christian friend, who had some influence with you, to go with him some short way, till you came to the Slough of Despond; and you thought yourself very wise when you scrambled out on that side which was nearest to your own home. And even you, Mr. Obstinate, are not always dogged: you have fits of thoughtfulness and intervals of tenderness. My hearer, how impressed you were at the prayer meeting! how excited you were at that revival service! When you heard a zealous brother preach at the theatre, what an impression was

produced! Ah, yes! the shop was shut up for a Sunday or two; you did not swear or get drunk for nearly a month; but you could not hold on any longer. Now, if those who were to begin were saved, why you would be secure, though you are at the present time as far from anything like religion as the darkness at midnight is from the blazing light of midday. Besides, common sense shows us, I say, that a man must hold on, or else he cannot be saved; because *the very worst of men are those who begin and then give up.* If you would turn over all the black pages of villany to find the name of the son of perdition, where would you find it? Why, among the apostles. The man who had wrought miracles and preached the gospel sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver — Judas Iscariot betrays the Son of Man with a kiss! Where is a worse name than that of Simon Magus? Simon "believed also," says the Scripture; and yet he offered the apostles money if they would sell to him the Holy Ghost. What an infamous notoriety Demas has obtained, who loved the present evil world! How much damage did Alexander the coppersmith do to Paul? "He did me much evil," said he; "the Lord reward him according to his works." And yet that Alexander was once foremost in danger, and even exposed his own person in the theatre at Ephesus that he might rescue the apostle. There are none so bad as those who once seemed to be good. "If the salt has lost its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?" That which is best when ripe, is worst when rotten; liquor which is sweetest in one stage, becomes sourest in another. "Let not him that putteth on his armor boast as though he putteth it off;" for even common sense teaches you that it is not to begin, but to continue to the end, which marks the time of the child of God.

But we need not look to analogy and to mere common sense. *Scripture is plain enough.* What says John? "They went out from us." Why? Were they ever saints? Oh no! "They went out from us, because they were not of us; for if they had been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us; but they went out from us, that it might be manifest that they were not

of us." They were no Christians, or else they had not thus apostatized. Peter saith, "It hath happened unto them according to the proverb: the dog hath returned to its vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire;" indicating at once most clearly that the dog, though it did vomit, always was a dog. When men disgorge their sins unwillingly, not giving them up because they dislike them, but because they cannot retain them, if a favorable time comes, they will return to swallow once more what they seemed to abandon. The sow that *was* washed — ay, bring it into the parlor, introduce it among society; it *was washed*, and well washed too; whoever saw so respectable a member of the honorable confraternity of swine before? Bring it in! Yes; but will you keep it there? Wait and see. Because you have not transformed it into a man, on the first occasion it will be found wallowing in the mire. Why? Because it was not a man, but a sow. And so we think we may learn from multitudes of other passages, if we had time to quote them, that those who go back into perdition are not saints at all; for perseverance is the badge of the righteous. "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." We not only get life by faith, but faith sustains it. "The just *shall live* by faith." "But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

What we have learned from Scripture, dear friends, has been abundantly confirmed *by observation*. Every day would I bless God that in so numerous a church we have comparatively so few who have proved false; but I have seen enough, and the Lord knoweth, more than enough, to make me very jealous over you with a godly jealousy. I could tell of many an instance of men and women who did run well. "What did hinder them, that they should not obey the truth?" I remember a young man of whom I thought as favorably as of any of you, and I believe he did at that time deserve our favorable judgment. He walked among us, one of the most hopeful of our sons, and we hoped that God would make him serviceable to his cause. He fell into bad company. There was enough conscience

left, after a long course of secret sin, to make him feel uncomfortable in his wickedness, though he did not give it up; and when at last his sin stared him in the face, and others knew it, so ashamed was he, that, though he bore the Christian name, he took poison, that he might escape the shame which he had brought upon himself. He was rescued — rescued by skill and the good providence of God; but where he is, and what he is, God only knoweth; for he had taken another poison, more deadly still, which made him the slave of his own lusts.

Do not think it is the young alone, however. It is a very lamentable fact that there are, in proportion, more backslidings among the old than the young; and if you want to find a great sinner in that respect, you will find him, surely, nine times out of ten with gray hairs on his head. Have I not frequently mentioned that you do not find in Scripture many cases of young people going astray. You do find believers sinning, but they were all getting old men. There is Noah — no youth. There is Lot, when drunken — no child. There is David with Bathsheba — no young man in the heat of passion. There is Peter denying his Lord — no boy at the time. These were men of experience and knowledge and wisdom. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

With sorrow do we remember one whom, years ago, we heard pray among us, and sweetly too; esteemed and trusted by us all. I remember a dear brother saying very kindly, but not too wisely, "If he is not a child of God, I am not." But what did he, my brethren, to our shame and sorrow, but go aside to the very worst and foulest of sin! and where is he now? Perhaps the ale-house may tell, or worse places still. So we have seen that earth's sun may be eclipsed, earth's stars may go out, and all human glory melt into shame. No true child of God perishes — hold that fast; but this is the badge of a true child of God, — that a man endures to the end, and if a man does not hold on, but slinks back to his old master, and once again fits on the old collar, and wears again the Satanic yoke, there is sure proof that he has never come out of the spiritual Egypt through

Jesus Christ, his leader, and hath never obtained that eternal life which cannot die, because it is born of God. I have thus, then, dear friends, said enough to prove, I think, beyond dispute, that the true badge of the Christian is perseverance, and that without it no man has proved himself to be a child of God.

II. Secondly, PERSEVERANCE IS, THEREFORE, THE TARGET OF ALL OUR SPIRITUAL ENEMIES.

We have many adversaries. Look at *the world!* The world does not object to our being Christians for a time; it will cheerfully overlook all misdemeanors in that way, if we will now shake hands, and be as we used to be. Your old companions, who used to call you such *good fellows* when you were bad fellows, would they not very readily forgive you for having been Christians if you would just go back and be as in days gone by? Oh, certainly! they would look upon your religion as a freak of folly, but they would very easily overlook it if you would give it up for the future. "Oh!" saith the world, "come back — come back to my arms once more; be enamored of me, and though thou hast spoken some hard words against me, and done some cruel deeds against me, I will cheerfully forgive thee." The world is always stabbing at the believer's perseverance. Sometimes she will bully him back; she will persecute him with her tongue — cruel mockings shall be used; and at another time she will cozen him, "Come thou back to me; oh! come thou back! Wherefore should we disagree? Thou art made for me, and I am made for thee!" And she beckons so gently and so sweetly, even as Solomon's harlot of old. This is the one thing with her, that thou shouldst cease to be a pilgrim, and settle down to buy and sell with her in Vanity Fair.

Your second enemy, *the flesh.* What is its aim? "Oh!" cries the flesh, "we have had enough of this; it is weary work being a pilgrim: come, give it up." Sloth says, "Sit still where thou art. Enough is as good as a feast; at least, of this tedious thing." Then Lust crieth, "Am I always to be mortified? Am I never to be indulged? Give me, at least, a furlough from this

constant warfare?" The flesh cares not how soft the chain, so that it does but hold us fast, and prevent our pressing on to glory.

Then comes in the devil; and sometimes he beats the big drum, and cries, with a thundering voice, "There is no heaven; there is no God: you are a fool to persevere." Or, changing his tactics, he cries, "Come back! I will give thee a better treatment than thou hadst before. Thou thoughtest me a hard master, but that was misrepresentation. Come and try me; I am a different devil from what I was ten years ago; I am respectable to what I was then. I do not want you to go back to the low theatre or the casino. Come with me, and be a respectable lover of pleasure. I tell thee, I can dress in broadcloth as well as in corduroy; and I can walk in the courts of kings, as well as in the courts and alleys of the beggar. Oh! come back!" he saith, "and make thyself one of mine." So that this hellish trinity — the world, the flesh, and the devil — all stab at the Christian's perseverance

His perseverance in service they will frequently attack: "What profit is there in serving God?" The devil will say to me sometimes, as he did to Jonah, "Flee thou unto Tarshish, and do not stop in this Nineveh: they will not believe thy word, though thou speak in God's name!" To you he will say, "Why, you are so busy all the six days of the week, what is the good of spending your Sunday with a parcel of noisy brats in a Sunday-school? Why go about with those tracts in the streets? Much good you will get from it. Would not you be better with having a little rest?" Ah! that word *rest*. Some of us are very fond of it; but we ought to recollect that we spoil it if we try to get it *here*, for rest is only beyond the grave. We shall have rest enough when once we come into the presence of our Lord. Perseverance in service, then, the devil would murder outright.

If he cannot stay us in service, he will try to prevent our perseverance *in suffering*. "Why be patient any longer?" says he. "Why sit on that dunghill, scraping your sores with a potsherd? Curse God, and die. You have been always poor since you have been a Christian; your business does not prosper; you

see, you cannot make money unless you do as others do. You must go with the times, or else you will not get on. Give it all up. Why be always suffering like this?" Thus the foul spirit tempts us. Or you may have espoused some good cause, and the moment you open your mouth, many laugh and try to put you down. "Well," says the devil, "be put down — what is the use of it? Why make yourself singularly eccentric, and expose yourself to perpetual martyrdom? It is all very nice," saith he, "if you will be a martyr, to be burnt at once, and have done with it; but to hang, like Lord Cobham, to be roasted over a slow fire for days, is not comfortable. Why," saith the tempter, "why be always suffering? Give it up." You see, then, it is also perseverance in suffering which the devil shooteth at.

Or, perhaps, it is perseverance *in steadfastness.* The love of many has waxed cold, but you remain zealous. "Well," saith he, "what is the good of your being so zealous? Other people are good enough people; you could not censure them: why do you want to be more righteous than they are? Why should you be pushing the church before you, and dragging the world behind you? What need is there for you to go two marches in one day? Is not one enough? Do as the rest do; loiter as they do. Sleep as do others, and let your lamp go out, as other virgins do." Thus is our perseverance in steadfastness frequently assailed.

Or else it will be *our doctrinal sentiments.* "Why," says Satan, "do you hold to these denominational creeds? Sensible men are getting more liberal; they are giving away what does not belong to them — God's truth; they are removing the old landmarks. Acts of uniformity are to be repealed; articles and creeds are to be laid aside as useless lumber, not necessary for this very enlightened age. Fall in with this, and be an Anything-arian. Believe that black is white; hold that truth and a lie are very much akin to one another, and that it does not matter which we do believe, for we are all of us right, though we flatly contradict each other; that the Bible is a nose of wax, to fit any face; that it does not teach anything material, but you may

make it say anything you like. Do that," saith he, "and be no longer firm in your opinion."

I think I have proved — and need not waste more words about it — that perseverance is the target for all enemies. Wear your shield, Christian, therefore, close upon your armor, and cry mightily unto God, that by his Spirit you may endure to the end.

III. Thirdly, brethren, PERSEVERANCE IS THE GLORY OF CHRIST.

That he makes all his people persevere to the end, is greatly to his honor. If they should fall away and perish, every office and work and attribute of Christ would be stained in the mire. If any one child of God should perish, where were Christ's covenant engagements? What is he worth as a mediator of the covenant and the surety of it, if he hath not made the promises sure to all the seed? My brethren, Christ is made a leader and commander of the people, to bring many souls into glory; but if he doth not bring them into glory, where is the Captain's honor? Where is the efficacy of the precious blood, if it does not effectually redeem? If it only redeemeth for a time, and then suffereth us to perish, where is its value? If it only blots out sin for a few weeks, and then permits that sin to return and to remain upon us, where, I say, is the glory of Calvary, and where is the lustre of the wounds of Jesus? He lives — he lives to intercede: but how can I honor his intercession, if it be fruitless? Does he not pray, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am;" and if they be not finally brought to be with him where he is, where is the honor of his intercession? Hath not the Pleader failed, and the great Mediator been dismissed without success? Is he not at this day in union with his people? But what is the value of union to Christ, if that union does not insure salvation? Is he not to-day at the right hand of God, preparing a place for his saints? and will he prepare a place for them, and then lose them on the road? Oh! can it be that he procures the harp and the crown, and will not

save souls to use them? My brethren, the perishing of one true child of God would be such dishonor to Jesus, that I cannot think of it without considering it as blasphemy. One true believer in hell! Oh! what laughter in the pit — what defiance, what unholy mirth! "Ah! Prince of life and glory," saith the prince of the pit, "I have defeated thee. I have snatched the prey from the mighty, and the lawful captive I have delivered; I have torn a jewel from thy crown. See! here it is! Thou didst redeem this soul with blood, and yet it is in hell." Hear what Satan cries — "Christ suffered for this soul, and yet God makes it suffer for itself. Where is the justice of God?" Christ came from heaven to earth to save this soul, and failed in the attempt, and I have him here;" and as he plunges that soul into deeper waves of woe, the shout of triumph goes up more and more blasphemously — "We have conquered heaven! We have rent the eternal covenant; we have foiled the purposes of God; we have defeated his decree; we have triumphed over the power of the Mediator, and cast his blood to the ground!" Shall it ever be? Atrocious question! It *can never be.* They who are in Christ are saved. They whom Jesus Christ hath really taken into union with himself, shall be with him where he is. But how are you to know whether you are in union with Christ? My brethren, you can only know it by obeying the apostle's words, "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure."

IV. I close, therefore, with but a hint on the last point, PERSEVERANCE SHOULD BE THE GREAT CARE OF EVERY CHRISTIAN — his daily and his nightly care. Oh beloved! I conjure you by the love of God, and by the love of your own souls, be faithful unto death. Have you difficulties? You must conquer them. Hannibal crossed the Alps, for his heart was full of fury against Rome; and you must cross the Alps of difficulty, for I trust your heart is full of hatred of sin. When Mr. Smeaton had built the lighthouse upon the Eddystone, he looked out anxiously after a storm to see if the edifice was still there, and it was his great joy when he could see it still standing; for a former

builder had constructed an edifice which he thought to be indestructible, and expressed a wish that he might be in it in the worst storm which ever blew; and he was so, and neither himself nor his lighthouse were ever seen afterwards. Now you have to be exposed to multitudes of storms. You must be in your lighthouse in the worse storm which ever blew. Build firmly, then, on the Rock of Ages, and make sure work for eternity; for if you do these things, ye shall never fall. For this church's sake, I pray you do it; for nothing can dishonor and weaken a church so much as the falls of professors. A thousand rivers flow to the sea and make rich the meadows, but no man heareth the sound thereof; but if there be one cataract, its roaring will be heard for miles, and every traveller will mark the fall. A thousand Christians can scarcely do such honor to their Master as one hypocrite can do dishonor to him. If you have ever tasted that the Lord is gracious, pray that your foot slip not. It would be infinitely better to bury you in the earth than see you buried in sin. If I must be lost, God grant it may not be as an apostate. If I must, after all, perish, were it not better never to have known the way of righteousness, than, after having known the theory of it, and something of the enjoyment of it, turn again to the beggarly elements of the world? Let your prayer be not against death, but against sin. For your own sake, for the church's sake, for the name of Christ's sake, I pray you do this. But ye cannot persevere except by much watchfulness in the closet, much carefulness over every action, much dependence upon the strong hand of the Holy Spirit, who alone can make you stand. Walk and live as in the sight of God, knowing where your great strength lieth; and depend upon it, you shall yet sing that sweet doxology in Jude, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." A simple faith brings the soul to Christ. Christ keeps the faith alive. That faith enables the believer to persevere, and so he enters heaven. May that be your lot and mine, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SERMON IX.

NOTHING BUT LEAVES.

"HE FOUND NOTHING BUT LEAVES." — Mark xi. 13.

Most of the miracles of Moses were grand displays of divine justice. What were the first ten wonders but ten plagues? The same may be said of the prophets, especially of Elijah and Elisha. Was it not significant both of the character and mission of Elias when he called fire from heaven upon the captains of fifties? Nor was he upon whom his mantle descended less terrible when the she-bears avenged him upon the mockers. It remained for our incarnate Lord to reveal the heart of God. The only-begotten was full of grace and truth, and in his miracles pre-eminently God is set forth to us as LOVE. With the exception of the miracle before us, and, perhaps, a part of another, all the miracles of Jesus were entirely benevolent in their character; indeed, this one is no exception in reality, but only in appearance. The raising of the dead, the feeding of the multitude, the stilling of the tempest, the healing of diseases — what were all these but displays of the loving-kindness of God? What was this to teach us but that Jesus Christ came forth from his Father on an errand of pure grace?

"Thine hands, dear Jesus, were not arm'd
With an avenging rod,
No hard commission to perform
The vengeance of a God.

"But all was mercy, all was mild,
And wrath forsook the throne,
When Christ on his kind errand came
And brought salvation down."

Let us rejoice that God commendeth his *love* towards us, because in "due time Christ died for the ungodly."

Yet, as if to show that Jesus the Saviour is also Jesus the Judge, one gleam of justice must dart forth. Where shall mercy direct its fall? See, my brethren! it glances not upon a man, but lights upon an unconscious, unsuffering thing — a tree. The curse, if we may call it a curse at all, did not fall on man or beast, or even the smallest insect: its bolt falls harmlessly upon a fig tree by the wayside. It bore upon itself the signs of barrenness, and perhaps was no one's property. Little, therefore, was the loss which any man sustained by the withering of that verdant mockery, while instruction more precious than a thousand acres of fig trees has been left for the benefit of all ages. The only other instance, at which I hinted just now, was the permission given to the devils to enter into the swine, and the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. In that case, again, what a mercy it was that the Saviour did not permit a band of men to become the victims of the evil one! It was infinitely better that the whole herd of swine should perish than that one poor man should be rendered a maniac through their influence. The creatures choked in the abyss were nothing but swine — swine which their Jewish owners had no right to keep; and even then they did not perish through Jesus Christ's agency, but through the malice of the devils, — for needs must even swine run when the devil drives.

Observe, then, with attention, this solitary instance of stern judgment wrought by the Saviour's hand. Consider seriously that if only once in his whole life Christ works a miracle of pure judgment, the lesson so unique must be very full of meaning. If there be but one curse, where does it fall? What is its symbolic teaching? I do not know that I ever felt more solemnly the need of true faithfulness before God than when I was looking over this miracle-parable — for such it may justly be called. The curse, you at once perceive, falls in its metaphorical and spiritual meaning upon those high professors who are destitute of true holiness; upon those who manifest great show of leaves,

but who bring forth no fruit unto God. Only one thunderbolt, and that for boasting pretenders; only one curse, and that for hypocrites. O blessed Spirit! write this heart-searching truth upon our hearts.

1. We will commence our exposition with the remark that THERE WERE MANY TREES WITH LEAVES ONLY UPON THEM, AND YET NONE OF THESE WERE CURSED BY THE SAVIOUR, SAVE ONLY THIS FIG TREE. It is the nature of many trees to yield to man nothing but their shade. The hungering Saviour did not resort to the oak or to the elm to look for food, nor could the fir tree, nor the pine, nor the box offer him any hope of refreshment; nor did he breathe one hard word concerning them, for he knew what was in them, and that they neither were, nor pretended to be, fruit-bearing trees. So, dear friends, there are many men whose lives bear leaves, but no fruit; and yet, thanks be unto God, almighty patience bears with them. They are allowed to live out their time, and then, it is true, they are cut down and cast into the fire; but while they are permitted to stand, no curse withers them: the long-suffering of God waiteth to be gracious to them. Here are some of the characters who have leaves but no fruit.

There are thousands who ignorantly follow *the sign, and know nothing of the substance.* In England, we think ourselves far in advance of popish countries; but how much of the essence of Popery peeps out in the worship of very many! They go to church or chapel, and they think that the mere going into the place and sitting a certain time and coming out again is an acceptable act to God; mere formality, you see, is mistaken for spiritual worship. They are careful to have their infants sprinkled, but what the ceremony means they know not; and without looking into the Bible to see whether the Lord commands any such an ordinance, they offer him their ignorant will-worship, either in obedience to custom, or in the superstition of ignorance. What the thing is, or why it is, they do not inquire, but go through a performance as certain parrots say their

prayers. They know nothing about the inward and spiritual grace which the catechism talks about, if, indeed, inward spiritual grace could ever be connected with an unscriptural outward and visible sign. When these poor souls come to the Lord's Supper, their thoughts go no farther than the bread and wine, or the hands which break the one and pour out the other. They know nothing whatever of communion with Jesus, of eating his flesh and drinking his blood. Their souls have proceeded as far as the shell, but they have never broken into the kernel to taste the sweetness thereof. They have a name to live, and are dead; their religion is a mere show; a signboard without an inn; a well-set table without meat; a pretty pageant where nothing is gold, but everything gilt, — nothing real, but all pasteboard, paint, plaster, and pretence. Nonconformists, your chapels swarm with such, and the houses of the Establishment are full of the same. Multitudes live and die satisfied with the outward trappings of religion, and are utter strangers to internal vital godliness. Yet such persons are not cursed in this life. No: they are to be pitied, to be prayed for, to be sought after, with words of love and honest truth; they are to be hoped for yet, for who knoweth but that God may call them to repentance, and they may yet receive the life of God into their souls?

Another very numerous class have *opinion, but not faith*; creed, but not credence. We meet them everywhere. How zealous they are for Protestantism! They would not only die for orthodoxy, but kill others as well. Perhaps it is the Calvinistic doctrine which they have received; and then the five points are as dear to them as their five senses. These men will contend, not to say earnestly, but savagely, for the faith. They very vehemently denounce all those who differ from them in the smallest degree, and deal damnation round the land with amazing liberality to all who are not full weight according to the balance of their little Zoar, Rehoboth, or Jireh; while all the while the spirit of Christ, the love of the Spirit, bowels of compassion, and holiness of character are no more to be expected from them than grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles. Doctrine, my brethren,

is to be prized above all price! Woe to the church of God when error shall be thought a trifle, for truth will be lightly esteemed; and when truth is gone, what is left? But at the same time we grossly mistake if we think that orthodoxy of creed will save us. I am sick of those cries of "the truth," "the truth," "the truth,' from men of rotten lives and unholy tempers. There is an orthodox as well as a heterodox road to hell, and the devil knows how to handle Calvinists quite as well as Arminians. No pale of any church can insure salvation; no form of doctrine can guarantee to us eternal life. "Ye must be born again." Ye must bring forth fruits meet for repentance. "Every tree which bringeth not forth fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire." Stopping short of vital union to the Lord Jesus by real faith, we miss the great qualification for entering heaven. Yet the time is not come when these mere head-knowers are cursed. These trees have leaves only, but no fatal curse has withered them hopelessly. No: they are to be sought after; they may yet know the Lord in their hearts, and the Holy Spirit may yet make them humble followers of the Lamb. Oh that it may be so!

A third class have *talk without feeling*. Mr. Talkative, in "Pilgrim's Progress," is the representative of a very numerous host. They speak very glibly concerning divine things. Whether the topic be doctrinal, experimental, or practical, they talk fluently upon everything. But, evidently, the whole thing comes from the throat and the lip: there is no welling up from the heart. If the thing came from the heart, it would be boiling; but now it hangs like an icicle from their lips. You know them — you may learn something from them; but all the while you are yourself aware that if they bless others by their words, they themselves remain unblessed. Ah! let us be very anxious lest this should be our own case. Let the preacher feel the anxiety of the Apostle Paul, lest, after having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway; and let my hearers feel the same concern, lest, after talking about the things of God, they should prove to be mere lip-servers, and not accepted children of the Most High.

Another tribe springs up just now before my eye, — those who have *regrets without repentance*. Many of you under a heart-searching sermon feel grieved on account of your sins, and yet never have the strength of mind to give them up. You say you are sorry, but yet go on in the same course. You do really feel, when death and judgment press upon you, a certain sort of regret that you could have been so foolish; but the next day the strength of temptation is such that you fall a prey to the very same infatuation. It is easy to bring a man to the river of regret, but you cannot make him drink the water of repentance. If Agag would be killed with words, no Amalekite would live. If men's transient sorrows for sin were real repentance on account of it, there is not a man living who would not, sometime or other, have been a true penitent. Here, however, are leaves only, and no fruit.

We have yet, again, another class of persons who have *resolves without action*. They *will!* Ah! that they *will!* but it is always in the future tense. They are hearers, and they are even feelers, but they are not *doers* of the Word; it never comes to that. They would be free, but they have not patience to file their fetters, nor grace to submit their manacles to the hammer. They see the right, but they permit the wrong to rule them. They are charmed with the beauties of holiness, and yet deluded with the wantonness of sin. They would run in the ways of God's commandments, but the road is too rough, and running is weary work. They would fight for God, but victory is hardly won, and so they turn back almost as soon as they have set out; they put their hand to the plough, and then prove utterly unworthy of the kingdom.

The great majority of persons who have any sort of religion at all, bear leaves; but they produce no fruit. I know there are some such here, and I solemnly warn you, though no curse falls upon you, though we do not think that the miracle now under consideration has any relation to you whatever, yet, remember there is nothing to be done with trees which bring forth only leaves, but in due time to use the axe upon them, and to cast them into the

fire; and *this must be your doom.* As sure as you live under the sound of the gospel, and yet are not converted by it, so surely will you be cast into outer darkness. As certainly as Jesus Christ invites you and ye will not come, so certainly will he send his angels to gather the dead branches together, and you among them, to cast them into the fire. Beware! beware, thou fruitless tree! thou shalt not stand forever! Mercy waters thee with her tears now; God's loving-kindness digs about thee still, — still the husbandman comes, seeking fruit upon thee, year after year. Beware! The edge of the axe is sharp, and the arm which wields it is nothing less than almighty. Beware! lest thou fall into the fire!

II. Secondly, THERE WERE OTHER TREES WITH NEITHER LEAVES NOR FRUIT, AND NONE OF THESE WERE CURSED.

The time of figs was not yet come. Now, as the fig tree either brings forth the fig before the leaf, or else produces figs and leaves at the same time, the major part of the trees, perhaps all of them, without exception of this one, were entirely without figs and without leaves; and yet Jesus did not curse any one of them, for the time of figs was not yet come.

What multitudes are destitute of anything like religion! They make no profession of it; they not only have no fruits of godliness, but they have no leaves even of outward respect to it; they do not frequent the court of the Lord's house; they use no form of prayer; they never attend upon ordinances. The great outlying mass of this huge city — how does religion affect it? It is a very sad thing to think that there are people living in total darkness next door to the light; that you may find in the very street where the gospel is preached, persons who have never heard a sermon. Are there not, throughout this city, tens and hundreds of thousands who know not their right hand from their left, in matters of godliness? Their children go to Sabbath-schools, but they themselves spend the whole Sabbath-day in anything except the worship of God. In our country parishes, very often neither the religion of the Establishment nor of Dis-

sent at all affects the population. Take, for instance, that village which will be disgracefully remembered as long as Essex endures, — the village of Hedingham. There are in that place not only parish churches, but dissenting meeting-houses; and yet the persons who foully murdered the poor wretch supposed to be a wizard, must have been as ignorant and indifferent to common sense, let alone religion, as even Hottentots or Kaffirs, to whom the light of religion has never come. Why was this? Is it not because there is not enough of missionary spirit among Christian people to seek out those who are in the lowest strata of society, so that multitudes escape without ever coming into contact with godliness at all? In London, the city missionaries will bear witness that while they can sometimes get at the wives, yet there are thousands of husbands, who are necessarily away at the time of the missionary's visit, who have not a word of rebuke, or exhortation, or invitation, or encouragement ever sounding in their ears at all, from the day of their birth to the day of their death; and they might, for all practical purposes, as well have been born in the centre of Africa as in the city of London; for they are without God, without hope, — aliens from the commonwealth of Israel; far off, not by wicked works only, but by dense ignorance of God.

These persons we may divide into two classes, upon neither of whom does the withering curse fall in this life. The first we look upon with hope. Although we see neither leaves nor fruit, we know that "*the time of figs is not yet.*" They are God's *elect*, but they are *not called*. Their names are in the Lamb's Book of Life, and were there from before the foundations of the world. Though they be dead in trespasses, they are the objects of divine love; and *they must*, in due time, be called by irresistible grace, and turned from darkness to light. "The Lord hath much people in this city," and this should be the encouragement of every one of you to try to do good, that God has among the vilest of the vile, the most reprobate, the most debauched and drunken, an elect people who *must* be saved. When you take the Word to them, you do so because God has ordained you to

be the messenger of life to their souls; and they *must* receive it, for so the decree of predestination runs: they must be called in the fulness of time to be the brethren of Christ and children of the Most High. They are *redeemed*, beloved friends, but *not regenerated;* as much redeemed with precious blood as the saints before the eternal throne. They are Christ's property; and yet, perhaps, they are waiting around the ale-house at this very moment, until the door shall open; — bought with Jesus' precious blood, and yet spending their nights in a brothel, and their days in sin. But if Jesus Christ purchased them he will have them. If he counted down the precious drops, God is not unfaithful to forget the price which his Son has paid. He will not suffer his substitution to be in any case an ineffectual, dead thing. Tens of thousands of redeemed ones are not regenerated yet, but regenerated they must be; and this is your comfort and mine, when we go out with the quickening Word of God. Nay, more; these ungodly ones are prayed for by Christ before the throne. "Neither pray I for these alone," saith the great Intercessor, "but for *them also which shall believe* on me through their word." They do not pray for themselves. Poor ignorant souls, they do not know anything about prayer; but Jesus prays for them. Their names are on his breast, and ere long they must bow their stubborn knee, breathing the penitential sigh before the throne of grace. "The time of figs *is* not yet." The predestinated moment has not struck; but, when it comes, *they shall*, for God will have his own; *they must*, for the Spirit is not to be withstood when he cometh forth with power; *they must* become the willing servants of the living God. "My people shall be willing in the day of my power." "He shall justify many." "He shall see of the travail of his soul." "He shall divide a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong."

No curse falls upon these; they deserve it, but eternal love prevents it. Their sins write it, but the finished sacrifice blots it out. They may well perish because they seek not mercy, but Christ intercedes for them, and live they shall.

Alas! however, among those who have neither leaves nor fruit, there is another class which *never* bring forth either the one or the other; they live in sin, and die in ignorance,—perishing without hope. As these leave the world, can they upbraid us for neglecting them? Are we clear of their blood? May not the blood of many of them cry from the ground against us? As they are condemned on account of sins, may they not accuse us because we did not take the gospel to them, but left them where they were? Dread thought! But let it not be shaken off; there are tens of thousands every day who pass into the world of spirits unsaved, and inherit the righteous wrath of God. Yet in this life, you see, no special curse falls upon them; and this miracle has no special bearing upon them: it bears upon a totally different class of people, of whom we will now speak.

III. WE HAVE BEFORE US A SPECIAL CASE.

I have already said that, in a fig tree, the fruit takes the precedence of the leaves, or the leaves and the fruit come at the same time; so that it is laid down as a general rule that if there be leaves upon a fig tree you may rightly expect to find fruit upon it.

To begin, then, with the explanation of this special case,—*in a fig tree fruit comes before leaves.* So in a true Christian, fruit always takes the precedence of profession. Find a man anywhere who is a true servant of God, and before he united himself with the church, or attempted to engage in public prayer, or to identify himself with the people of God, he searched to see whether he had real repentance on account of sin; he desired to know whether he had a sincere and genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and he perhaps tarried some little time to try himself, to see whether there were the fruits of holiness in his daily life. Indeed, I may say that there are some who wait too long; they are so afraid lest they should make a profession before they have grace in possession, that they will wait year after year—too long; become unwise, and make what was a virtue become a vice. Still this is the rule with Christians;

they first give themselves to the Lord and afterwards to the Lord's people, according to his will. You who are the servants of God — do you not scorn to vaunt yourselves beyond your line and measure? Would you not think it disgraceful on your part to profess anything which you have not felt? Do you not feel a holy jealousy when you are teaching others, lest you should teach more than God has taught you? and are you not afraid, even in your prayers, lest you should use expressions which are beyond your own depth of meaning? I am sure the true Christian is always afraid of anything like having the leaves before he has the fruit.

Another remark follows, from this — *where we see the leaves we have a right to expect the fruit.* When I see a man a church member, when I hear him engage in prayer, I expect to see in him holiness, — the character and the image of Christ. I have a right to expect it, because the man has solemnly avowed that he is the partaker of divine grace. You cannot join a church without taking upon yourselves very solemn responsibilities. What do you declare when you come to see us, and ask to be admitted into fellowship? You tell us that you have passed from death unto life; that you have been born again; that there has been a change in you, the like of which you never knew before; one which only God could have wrought. You tell us you are in the habit of private prayer; that you have a desire for the conversion of others. If you did not so profess, we dare not receive you. Well, now, having made these professions, it would be insincere on our part if we did not expect to see your characters holy, and your conversation correct; we have a right to expect it from your own professions. We have a right to expect it from the work of the Spirit, which you claim to have received. Shall the Holy Spirit work in man's heart to produce a trifle? Do you think that the Spirit of God would have written us this Book, and that Jesus Christ would have shed his precious blood to produce a hypocrite? Is an inconsistent Christian the highest work of God? I suppose God's plan of salvation to be that which has more exercised his thoughts and wisdom than the

making of all worlds and the sustenance of all providence; and shall this best, this highest, this darling work of God produce no more than that poor, mean, talking, unacting, fruitless deceiver? Ye have no love for souls, no care for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom, and yet think that the Spirit has made you what you are! No zeal, no melting bowels of compassion, no cries of earnest entreaty, no wrestling with God, no holiness, no self-denial; and yet say that you are a vessel made by the Master and fitted for his use! How can this be? No; if you profess to be a Christian, from the necessity of the Spirit's work we have a right to expect fruit from you. Besides, in genuine professors we do get the fruit; we see a faithful attachment to the Redeemer's cause, an endurance to the end, in poverty, in sickness, in shame, in persecution. We see other professors holding fast to the truth; they are not led aside by temptation; neither do they disgrace the cause they have espoused: and, if you profess to be one of the same order, we have a right to look for the same blessed fruits of the Spirit in you; and if we see them not, you have belied us.

Observe, further, that *our Lord hungers for fruit.* A hungry person seeks for something which may satisfy him, — for fruit, not leaves. Jesus hungers for your holiness. A strong expression, you will say; but I doubt not of its accuracy. For what were we elected? We were predestinated to be conformed unto the image of God's Son; we were chosen to good works, "which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." What is the end of our redemption? Why did Jesus Christ die? "He gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Why have we been called but that we should be called to be saints? To what end are any of the great operations of the covenant of grace? Do they not all point at our holiness? If you will think of any privilege which the Lord confers upon his people through Christ, you will perceive that they all aim at the sanctification of the chosen people — the making of them to bring forth fruit, that God the Father may

be glorified in them. O Christian! for this the tears of the Saviour; for this the agony and bloody sweat; for this the five death-wounds; for this the burial and the resurrection, that he makes you holy, even perfectly holy, like unto himself! And can it be, when he hungers after fruit, you think nothing of fruit-bearing? O professor! how base art thou, to call thyself a blood-bought child of God, and yet to live unto thyself! How darest thou, O barren tree! professing to be watered by the bloody sweat, and digged by the griefs and woes of the wounded Saviour — how darest thou bring forth leaves and no fruit? Oh sacrilegious mockery of a hungry Saviour! oh blasphemous tantalizing of a hungry Lord! that thou shouldst profess to have cost him all this, and yet yield him nothing! When I think that Jesus hungers after fruit in me, it stirs me up to do more for him. Does it not have the same effect on you? He hungers for your good works; he hungers to see you useful. Jesus, the King of kings, hungers after your prayers — hungers after your anxieties for the souls of others; and nothing ever will satisfy him for the travail of his soul but seeing you wholly devoted to his cause.

This brings us into the very midst and meaning of the miracle. *There are some, then, who make unusual profession, and yet disappoint the Saviour in his just expectations. The Jews* did this. When Jesus Christ came it was not the time of figs. The time for great holiness was after the coming of Christ and the pouring out of the Spirit. All the other nations were without leaves. Greece, Rome, — all these showed no signs of progress; but there was the Jewish nation covered with leaves. They professed already to have obtained the blessings which he came to bring. There stood the Pharisee, with his long prayers; there were the lawyers and the Scribes, with their deep knowledge of the things of the kingdom. They said they had the light. The time of figs was not come, but yet they had the leaves, though not a single fruit; and you know what a curse fell on Israel: how, in the day of Jerusalem's destruction, the tree was

withered altogether from its root, because it had its leaves, but had no fruit.

The same will be true of any *church*. There are times when all the churches seem sunken alike in lethargy; such a time we had, say, ten years ago. But one church, perhaps, seems to be all alive. The congregations are large. Much, apparently, is proposed for the growth of the Saviour's kingdom. A deal of noise is made about it. There is much talk, and the people are all expectation; and if there be no fruit, no real consecration to Christ, — if there be no genuine liberality, no earnest vital godliness, no hallowed consistency, — other churches may live on; but such a church as this, making so high a profession, and being so precocious in the produce of leaves, shall have a curse from God. No man shall eat fruit of it forever, and it shall wither away.

In the case of *individuals* the moral of our miracle runs thus. Some are looked upon as *young believers*, who early join the church. "The time of figs is not yet." It is not a very ordinary case to see children converted; but we do see some, and we are very grateful. We are jealous, however, lest we should see leaves but not fruit. These juveniles are extraordinary cases; and on that account we look for higher results. When we are disappointed, what shall come upon such but a curse upon their precocity, which led them to the deception? Some of us were converted, or profess to have been, when young; and if we have lived hitherto, and all we have produced has been merely words, resolves, professions, but not fruit unto God, we must expect the curse.

Again, *professors eminent in station*. There are necessarily but few ministers, but few church officers; but when men so distinguish themselves by zeal, or by louder professions than others, as to gain the ear of the Christian public, and are placed in responsible positions — if they bring forth no fruit, they are the persons upon whom the curse will light. It may be with other Christians that "the time of figs is not yet:" they have not made the advances which these profess to have made; but

having been, upon their own profession, elected to an office which essentially requires fruit, since they yield it not, let them beware.

To those who make professions of much love to Christ the same caution may be given. With the most of Christians, I am afraid, I must say that "the time of figs is not yet," for we are too much like the Laodicean church. But you meet with some men — how much they are in love with Christ! How sweetly they can *talk* about him! But what do they *do* for him? Nothing — nothing! Their love lies just in the wind which comes out of their own mouths, and that is all. Now, when the Lord has a curse, he will deal it out on such. They went beyond all others in an untimely declaration of a very fervent love, and now they yield him no fruit. "Yes," said one, "I love God so much that I do not reckon that anything I have is my own. It is all the Lord's — all the Lord's, and I am his steward." Well, this dear good man, of course, joined the church; and after a time, some mission work wanted a little help. What was his reply? "When I pay my seat rent, I have done all I intend to do." A man of wealth and means! After a little time, this same man found it inconvenient even to pay for his seat, and goes now to a place not quite so full, where he can get a seat and do nothing to support the ministry! If there is a special thunderbolt anywhere, it is these unctious hypocrites who whine about love to Christ, and bow down at the shrine of mammon.

Or, take another case. You meet with others whose profession is not of so much love, but it is of *much experience.* Oh, what experience they have had! What deep experience! Ah! they know the humblings of heart and the plague of human nature! They know the depths of corruption, and the heights of divine fellowship, and so on. Yes; and if you go into the shop, you find the corruption is carried on behind the counter, and the deceit in the day-book. If they do not know the plague of their own hearts, at least they are a plague to their own household. Such people are abhorrent to all men, and much more to God.

Others you meet with *who have a censorious tongue.* What good people they must be — they can see the faults of other people so plainly! This church is not right, and the other is not right; and yonder preacher — well, some people think him a very good man, but they do not. They can see the deficiencies in the various denominations, and they observe that very few really carry out Scripture as it should be carried out. They complain of want of love, and are the very people who create that want. Now, if you will watch these very censorious people, the very faults they indicate in others they are indulging in themselves; and while they are seeking to find out the mote in their brother's eye, they have a beam in their own. These are the people who are indicated by this fig tree; for they ought, according to their own showing, taking them on their own ground, to be better than other people. If what they say be true, they are bright particular stars, and they ought to give special light to the world. They are such that even Jesus Christ himself might expect to receive fruit from them; but they are nothing but deceivers, with these high soarings and proud boastings: they are nothing after all but pretenders. Like Jezebel with her paint, which made her all the uglier, they would seem to be what they are not. As old Adam says, "They are candles with big wicks and no tallow, and when they go out they make a foul and nauseous smell." "They have summer sweating on their brow, and winter freezing in their hearts." You would think them the land of Goshen, but prove them the wilderness of sin. Let us search ourselves, lest such be the case with us.

IV. And now to close, SUCH A TREE MIGHT WELL BE WITHERED. *Deception is abhorred of God.* There was the Jewish temple; there were the priests standing in solemn pomp; there were the abundant sacrifices of God's altar. But was God pleased with his temple? No; because in the temple you had all the leaves, you had all the externals of worship; but there was no true prayer, no belief in the great Lamb of God's passover, no truth, no righteousness, no love of men, no care for the

glory of God: and so the temple, which had been a house of prayer, had become a den of thieves. You do not marvel that the temple was destroyed. You and I may become just like that temple. We may go on with all the externals of religions; nobody may miss us out of our seat at Tabernacle: nay, we may never miss our Christian engagements; we may be in all external matters more precise than we used to be, and yet for all that we may have become in our hearts a den of thieves: the heart may be given to the world while external ceremonies are still kept up and maintained. Let us beware of this, for such a place cannot be long without a curse. It is abhorrent to God.

Again, *it is deceptive to man.* Look at that temple! What do men go there for? To see holiness and virtue. Why tread they its hallowed courts? To get nearer to God. And what do they find there? Instead of holiness, covetousness; instead of getting nearer to God, they get into the midst of a mart where men are haggling about the price of doves, and bickering with one another about the changing of shekels. So men may watch to hear some seasonable word from our lips, and instead of that may get evil; and as that temple was cursed for deluding men, so may we be, because we deceive and disappoint the wants of mankind.

More than this: this barren fig tree *committed sacrilege upon Christ*, did it not? Might it not have exposed him to ridicule? Some might have said: "How goest thou to a tree, thou prophet, whereon there is no fruit?" A false professor exposes Christ to ridicule. As the temple of old dishonored God, so does a Christian when his heart is not right; he does dishonor to God, and makes the holy cause to be trodden under foot of the adversary. Such men indeed have reason to beware.

Once more: this tree might well be cursed, because its bringing forth nothing but leaves was a plain evidence of its sterility. It had force and vitality, but it turned it to ill account, and would continue to do so. The curse of Christ was but a confirmation of what it already was. He did as good as say, "He that is unfruitful, let him be unfruitful still." And now, what if Christ

should come into this Tabernacle this morning, and should look on you and on me, and see in any of us great profession and great pomp of leaves, and yet no fruit, — what if he should pronounce the curse on us? — what would be the effect? We should wither away as others have done. What mean we by this? Why, they have on a sudden turned to the world. We could not understand why such fair saints should on a sudden become such black devils; the fact was, Christ had pronounced the word, and they began to wither away. If he should pronounce the unmasking word on any mere professor here, and say, "Let no man eat fruit of thee forever," you will go into gross outward sin and wither to your shame. This will take place probably on a sudden; and, taking place, your case will be irretrievable. You never afterwards will be restored. The blast which shall fall upon you will be eternal; you will live as a lasting monument of the terrible justice of Christ, as the great Head of the church; you will be spared to let it be seen that a man outside the church may escape with impunity in this life, but a man inside the church shall have a present curse, and be made to stand as a tree blasted by the lightning of God forever. Now, this is a heart-searching matter. It went through me yesterday when I thought, "Well, here am I; I have professed to be called of God to the ministry; I have forced myself into a leading place in God's church; I have voluntarily put myself into a place where sevenfold damnation is my inevitable inheritance if I be not true and sincere." I could almost wish myself back out of the church, or at least in the obscurest place in her ranks, to escape the perils and responsibilities of my position; and so may you, if you have not the witness of the Spirit in you that you are born of God; — you may wish that you never thought of Christ, and never dreamed of taking his name upon you. If you have by diligence worked yourself into a high position among God's people, — if you have mere leaves without the fruit, — the more sure is the curse, because the greater the disappointment of the Saviour. The more you profess, the more is expected of you: and if you do not yield it, the more just the condemnation when you shall be left to stand

forever withered by the curse of Christ. O men and brethren! let us tremble before the heart-searching eye of God; but let us still remember that grace can make us fruitful yet. The way of mercy is open still Let us apply to the wounds of Christ this morning. If we have never begun, let us begin now. Now let us throw our arms about the Saviour, and take him to be ours; and, having done this, let us seek divine grace, that for the rest of our lives we may work for God. Oh! I do hope to do more for God, and I hope you will. O Holy Spirit! work in us mightily, for in thee is our fruit found! Amen.

SERMON X.

THE GREAT LIBERATOR.

"IF THE SON THEREFORE SHALL MAKE YOU FREE, YE SHALL BE FREE INDEED." — John viii. 36.

BLESSED is that word "free," and blessed is he who spends himself to make men so. Ye did well to crowd your streets and to welcome with your joyous acclamations the man who has broken the yoke from off the neck of the oppressed. Many sons of Italy have done valiantly; but he excels them all, and deserves the love of all the good and brave. *Political* slavery is an intolerable evil. To live, to think, to act, to speak at the permission of another! Better have no life at all! To depend for my existence upon a despot's will, is death itself. Craven spirits may wear the dog-collar which their master puts upon them, and fawn at his feet for the bones of his table; but men who are worthy of the name had rather feed the vultures on the battle-field. The burden of civil bondage is too heavy for bold spirits to bear with patience, and therefore they fret and murmur beneath it; this murmuring the tyrant loves not, and therefore he throws the sufferers into his dungeons, and bids them wear out their days in captivity. Blessed is he who hurls down the despot, bursts the doors of his dungeons, and gives true men their rights. We have never felt, and therefore we know not, the bitterness of thraldom. Our emancipators have gone to the world of spirits, bequeathing us an heirloom of liberty, for which we should love their names and reverence their God. If they could have lived on till now, how we should honor them! but as they are gone,

we do well to applaud our illustrious guest as if we saw in him the spirit of all our glorious liberators worthily enshrined. Political liberty allows scope for so much of all that is good and ennobling, and its opposite involves so much that is debasing, that the mightiest nation destitute of it is poor indeed, and the poorest of all people, if they be but free, are truly rich.

But, my brethren, men may have political liberty to the very fullest extent, and yet be slaves; for there is such a thing as religious bondage. He who cringes before a priest — he who dreads his anathema, or who creeps at his feet to receive his blessing — is an abject slave. He may call himself a freeman, but his soul is in bondage vile if superstition makes him wear the chain. To be afraid of the mutterings of a man like myself, — to bow before a piece of wood or a yard of painted canvas, — to reverence a morsel of bread or a rotten bone — this is mental slavery indeed. They *call* the negro *slave* in the Southern Confederacy, but men who prostrate their reason before the throne of superstition *are* slaves through and through. To yield obedience to our Lord, to offer prayer to God Most High, is perfect freedom; but to tell my heart out to a mortal with a shaven crown, — to trust my family secrets and my wife's character to the commands of a man who may be all the while wallowing in debauchery, — is worse than the worst form of serfdom. I would sooner serve the most cruel Sultan who ever crushed humanity beneath his iron heel than bow before the Pope or any other priest of man's making. The tyranny of priestcraft is the worst of ills. Ye may cut through the bonds of despots with a sword, but the sword of the Lord himself is needed here. Truth must file these fetters, and the Holy Spirit must open these dungeons. Ye may escape from prison; but superstition hangs round a man, and with its deadly influence keeps him ever in its dark and gloomy cell. Scepticism, which proposes to snap the chains of superstition, only supplants a blind belief with an unhallowed credulity, and leaves the victim as oppressed as ever. Jesus the Son alone can make men truly free. Happy are they whom he has delivered from superstition. Blessed are our eyes that this

day we see the light of gospel liberty, and are no longer immured in popish darkness. Let us remember our privileges, and bless God with a loud voice that the darkness is past and the true light shineth; since the name of Jesus, the preaching of his Word and the power of his truth have, in this respect, in a high degree, made our nation free.

Yet a man may be delivered from the bond of superstition, and be still a serf; for he who is not ruled by a priest may still be controlled by the devil or by his own lusts, which is much the same. Our carnal desires and inclinations are domineering lords enough, as those know who follow out their commands. A man may say, "I feel not supernatural terrors; I know no superstitious horrors;" and then, folding his arms, he may boast that he is free; but he may all the while be a slave to his own evil heart. He may be grinding at the mill of avarice, rotting in the reeking dungeon of sensuality, dragged along by the chains of maddened anger, or borne down by the yoke of fashionable custom. He is the free man who is master of himself through the grace of God. He who serves his own passions is the slave of the worst of despots. Talk to me not of dark dungeons beneath the sea level; speak not to me of pits in which men have been immured and forgotten; tell me not of heavy chains, nor even of racks and the consuming fire: the slave of sin and Satan, sooner or later, knows greater horrors than these — his doom more terrible because eternal, and his slavery more hopeless because it is one into which he willingly commits himself.

Perhaps there are those present who claim liberty for themselves, and say that they are able to control their passions, and have never given way to impure desires. Ay, a man may get as far as that in a modified sense, and yet not be free. Perhaps I address those who, knowing the right, have struggled for it against the wrong. You have reformed yourselves from follies into which you had fallen; you have by diligence brought the flesh somewhat under, in its outward manifestations of sin, and now your life is moral, your conduct is respectable, your reputation high: still, for all that, it may be that you are conscious

that you are not free. Your old sins haunt you; your former corruptions perplex you; you have not found peace, for you have not obtained forgiveness. You have buried your sins beneath the earth of years, but conscience has given them a resurrection, and the ghosts of your past transgressions haunt you. You can scarce sleep at night, because of the recollection of the wrath of God which you deserve; and by day there is a gall put into your sweetest draughts, because you know that you have sinned against heaven, and that heaven must visit with vengeance your transgression. Ye have not yet come to the full liberty of the children of God, as you will do if you cast yourselves into the hands of Jesus who looseth the captives. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed,"—free as the mere political liberator cannot make you; free as he cannot make you who merely delivers you from superstition; free as reformation cannot make you; free as God alone can make you by his free Spirit. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

Now, this morning may the Lord give his servant help from on high while I try to talk with you. To those who feel to-day their slavery, my message may be profitable. Our *first* point is, that to those who are the bondslaves of Satan, *liberty is possible.* The text would not mock us with a dream: it says, "*If* the Son therefore shall make you free." All who are slaves shall not be set free; but there is the possibility of liberty implied in the text. Blessed "if;" it is like the prison window,—through the stony wall it lets in enough sunshine for us to read the word "hope" with. "*If* the Son therefore shall make you free." *Secondly, there is a false freedom;* you see that in the text—"Ye shall be free *indeed*," it says. There were some who professed to be free, but were not so. The Greek is, "Ye shall be free *really*," for there be some who are free only in the name, and in the shadow of freedom, but who are not free as to the substance. Then, *thirdly, real freedom must come to us from the Son*, that glorious Son of God who, being free, and giving himself to us, gives us freedom. And then we shall close by putting a few

personal questions as to whether the Son hath made us free, or whether we still remain slaves.

I. First then, dear friends, our text rings a sweet silver bell of hope in the ear of those who are imprisoned by their sin. FREEDOM IS POSSIBLE; the word "if" implies it. The Son of God can make the prisoner free. No matter who you are, nor what you are, nor how many years you may have remained the slaves of Satan, the Son, the glorious Liberator, can make you free. "He is able also to save them to the uttermost, who come unto God by him." Perhaps that which weighs upon you most heavily is a sense of your *past guilt*. "I have offended God: I have offended often, wilfully, atrociously, with many aggravations. On such and such a day I offended him in the foulest manner, and with deliberation. On other days I have run greedily in a course of vice. Nothing has restrained me from disobedience, and nothing has impelled me to the service of God. All that his Word says against me, I deserve; and every threatening which his Book utters, is justly due to me, and may well be fulfilled. Is there a possibility that I can escape from guilt? Can so foul a sinner as I am be made clean? I know that the leopard cannot lose its spots, nor the Ethiopian change his skin by his own efforts. Is there a power divine which can take away my spots, and change my nature?" Sinner, there is. No sin which you have committed need shut you out of heaven. However damnable your iniquities may have been, there is forgiveness with God that he may be feared. You may have gone to the very verge of perdition, but the arm of God's grace is long enough to reach you. You may sit to-day with your tongue padlocked with blasphemy, your hands fast bound by acts of atrocious violence, your heart fettered with corruption, your feet chained fast to the satanic blocks of unbelief, your whole self locked up in the bondage of corruption; but there is one so mighty to save that he can set *even you* free. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

In the matter of guilt, then, there is the possibility of freedom. "But can I be freed from *the punishment* of sin?" saith another. "God is just: he must punish sin. It is not possible that the Judge of all the earth should allow such a rebel as I am to escape. Shall I go scot free? Shall I have the same reward with the perfectly righteous? After years of unbelief, am I still to be treated as though I had always been a willing and loving child? This is not just: I must be punished." Sinner, there is no need that thou shouldst be cast into hell; nay, thou shalt not be, if thy trust is placed in the blood-shedding upon Calvary. There is an imperative need that sin should be punished, but there is no need that it should be punished in your person. The stern laws of justice demand that sin should meet with satisfaction; but there is no law which demands that it should receive satisfaction from you; for if thou believest, Christ *has* given satisfaction for thee. If thou dost trust Jesus Christ to save thee, be assured that Christ was punished in thy stead, and suffered the whole of wrath divine, so that there is no fear of thy being cast into hell. If thou believest, thou canst not be punished; for there is no charge against *thee*, — thy sin having been laid on Christ; and there can be no punishment exacted from thee, for Christ has already discharged the whole. God's justice cannot demand two executions for the same offence. Oh! let not the flames of hell alarm thee, sinner; let not Satan provoke thee to despair by thoughts of the worm that never dies, and of the fire that never can be quenched. Thou needst not go thither; there is a possibility of deliverance for thee: and though thy heart says, "Never, never shall I escape," trust not thy heart; "God is greater than thy heart, and knoweth all things." Believe thou his testimony, and fly thou to the great Deliverer for liberty. Freedom, then, from punishment is possible through Christ.

I think I hear one say, "Ah! but if I were saved from past sin, and from all the punishment of it, yet still I should submit to *the power of sin* again. I have a wolf within my heart hungering after sin, which will not be satisfied though it be glutted

with evil. The insatiable horse-leech of my lust ever crieth, 'Give, give!' Can I be delivered from it? I have been bound with many resolutions, but sin, like Samson, has snapped them as though they were but green withs. I have been shut up in many professions, as though I was now, once for all, a prisoner to morality; but I have taken up posts and bars, and every other restraint which kept me in, and I have gone back to my old uncleannesses. Can I — can I be saved from all these propensities, and all this inbred corruption?" My dear friend, there is a hope for thee, that thou mayst be. If thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ, that same blood by which sin is pardoned enables man to overcome sin. They in heaven washed their robes and made them white in his blood; but they have another note in their song, — they *overcame* through the blood of the Lamb. Not only were they delivered from guilt, but from the power of sin. I do not tell you that in this life Christ himself will make you perfectly free from indwelling sin: there will always be some corruption left in you to struggle with, some Canaanite still in the land to exercise your faith and to teach you the value of a Saviour: but the neck of sin shall be under your foot; God shall lead captive the great Adonibezek of your lust, and you shall cut off his thumbs, so that he cannot handle weapons of war. If the enemy cannot be destroyed, at least his head shall be broken, and he shall never have reigning power over thee; you shall be free from sin, to live no longer therein. Oh! that blessed word "if!" How it sparkles! It may seem but a little star: may it herald the dawning of the Sun of Righteousness within you! — "if the Son therefore shall make you free." "Oh," says one, "that is a great 'if' indeed. It cannot be, surely! — my guilt pardoned, my punishment remitted, and my nature changed! How can it be?" Dear friend, it may be, and I trust it will be this morning; for this "if" comforts the preacher with a hope of success in delivering the Word; and may it give some hope to the hearers, that perhaps you may be made free yourselves.

But I think I hear another exclaim, "Sir, I am in bondage

through *fear of death.* Go where I may, enjoying no assurance of acceptance in Christ, I am afraid to die. I know that I must one of these days close these eyes in the slumbers of the grave; but oh! it is a dread thought to me that I must stand before my God and pass the solemn test. I cannot look into the sepulchre without feeling that it is a cold, damp place; I cannot think of eternity without remembering the terrors which cluster round it to a sinner, 'where their worm dieth not, and where their fire is not quenched.'" Ah, but, my dear friend, if the Son make you free, he will deliver you from the fear of death. When sin is pardoned, then the law is satisfied; and when the law is satisfied, then death becomes a friend. The strength of sin is the law: the law is fulfilled, the strength of sin is broken. The sting of death is sin: sin is pardoned, death has a sting no longer. If thou believest in Christ thou shalt never die, in that sense in which thou dreadest death: thou shalt fall asleep, but thou shalt never die. That death of which thou thinkest is not the Christian's portion: it belongs to the ungodly. In it thou shalt have no share, if thou trustest the Saviour. Borne on angels' wings to heaven, up from calamity, imperfection, temptation and trial shalt thou mount, flitting with the wings of a dove far above the clouds of sorrow; leaving this dusky globe behind thee, thou shalt enter into the splendors of immortality. Thou shalt not die, but wake out of this dying world into a life of glory. Come, soul, if thou trustest in Christ, this "if" shall be no if, but a certainty to-day — the Son shall make you free indeed. I do not think I can bring out the full value of this liberty by merely speaking of the evils which we are delivered *from;* you know, brethren, freedom consists not only in a negative but in a positive, — we are not only free *from*, but we are free *to*. We hear of persons receiving the freedom of a city. This implies that certain privileges are bestowed. Now "if the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed," in the sense of privilege; you shall be free to call yourself God's child; you shall be free to say, "Abba, Father," without rebuke; you shall be free to claim the protection of that Father's house,

and the provision of his bounty; you shall be free to come to his knees with all your trials, and tell him all your griefs; you shall be free to plead his promises and to receive the fulfilment of them too; you shall be free to sit at his table, not as a servant is permitted sometimes to sit down when the feast is over to eat the leavings, but you shall sit there as a well-beloved son to eat the fatted calf, while your Father with you eats, drinks, and is merry; you shall be free to enter into the church on earth, the mother of us all; free to all her ordinances; free to share in all those boons which Christ hath given to his spouse; and when you die, you shall be free to enter into the rest which remaineth for the people of God; free of the New Jerusalem which is above; free to her harps of gold and to her streets of joy; free to her great banquet which lasteth forever; free to the heart of God, to the throne of Christ, and to the blessedness of eternity. Oh! how, *how* good it is to think that there is a possibility of a freedom to such privileges as these, and a possibility of it to the vilest of the vile! for some who were grossly guilty, some who had far gone astray, have nevertheless enjoyed the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of peace. Look at Paul! No man enters more into the mystery of the gospel than he. He had freedom to do so: he could comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; and yet it is he — it is he who once foamed out threatenings, who sucked the blood of the saints; it is he who dyed his hands up to the very elbows in murderous gore; it is he who hated Christ, and was a persecutor, and injurious; and yet is he free from evil, and he is free to all the privileges of the chosen of God. And why not you? And why not you? Woman, tottering and trembling, why should not — why should not the Son make thee free? Man, tossed about with many doubts, why should not the great Liberator appear to thee? Can there be a reason why not? Thou hast not read the rolls of predestination and discovered that thy name has been left out. It has not been revealed that for thee there is no atonement; but it is revealed to thee that whosoever believeth on Him

is not condemned. And this is the testimony which comes to thee — oh that thou wouldst receive it! — "He that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ, hath everlasting life." Oh that thou wouldst be bold and trust Christ this morning, and the "if" which is in our text shall become a blessed certainty to thee. So, then, there is a possibility for freedom. We will pause awhile, and then warn you against false freedom.

II. BEWARE OF FALSE LIBERTY. Every good thing is imitated by Satan, who is the master of counterfeits, and hence, liberty — a word fit to be used in heaven, and almost too good for fallen earth — has been used for the very basest of purposes, and men have misnamed the devil's offspring by this angelic title. We have in spiritual matters things called liberty which are no liberty. There is *Antinomian liberty* — God deliver us from that! A man saith, "I am not under the law of God, therefore I will live as I like." A most blessed truth followed by a most atrocious inference. The Christian is not under the law, but under grace — that is a very precious fact: it is much better to serve God because we love him, than because we are afraid of his wrath. To be under the law is to give God the service of a slave who fears the lash; but to be under grace is to serve God out of pure love to him. Oh to be a child, and to give the obedience of a child, and not the homage of a serf! But the Antinomian saith, "I am not under the law, therefore will I live and fulfil my own lust and pleasures." Paul says of those who argue thus, their damnation is just. We have had the pain of knowing some who have said, "I am God's elect; Christ shed his blood for me; I shall never perish;" and then they have gone to the ale-house, they have sung the drunkard's song, and have even used the drunkard's oath. What is this, dear friends, but a strong delusion to believe a lie? They who can do this, must surely have been some time in Satan's oven, to be baked so hard. Why, these must have had their consciences taken out of them. Are they not turned to something worse than brutes? The dog doth not say, "My master feeds me, and he

will not destroy me, but is fond of me, therefore will I snarl at him or rend him." Even the ass doth not say, "My master gives me fodder, therefore will I dash my heels into his face." "The ox knoweth its owner, and the ass his master's crib;" but these men only know God to provoke him, and they profess that his love to them gives them a liberty to rebel against his will. God deliver you from any such freedom as this; be not legalists, but love the law of God, and in it make your delight. Abhor all idea of being saved by good works, but oh! be as full of good works as if you were to be saved by them. Walk in holiness as if your own walking would make you enter into heaven, and then rest on Christ, knowing that nothing of your own can ever open the gate of the Celestial City. Eschew and abhor anything like Antinomianism. Do not be afraid of high doctrine. Men sometimes mis-label good sound Calvinism as Antinomianism. Do not be afraid of that; do not be alarmed at the ugly word Antinomianism, if it does not exist: but the thing itself — flee from it as from a serpent. Shake off the venomous beast into the fire, as Paul did the viper which he found amongst the fagots. When you are gathering up the doctrines of grace to cheer and comfort you, this deadly viper getteth into the midst; and when the fire begins to burn, he cometh out of the heat and fasteneth upon you. Shake him off into the fire of divine love, and there let the monster be consumed. My brethren, if we are loved of God with an everlasting love, and are no more under the law, but free from its curse, let us serve God with all our heart's gratitude to him: let us say, "I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds." Let the loosing of our bonds be an argument for service.

Then, again, beloved, there is another kind of freedom of which we must all be aware, — it is a *notional, professional freedom.* "Free! yes, certainly we are; we are the people of God," say some. Not that they have ever passed from death unto life; not that vital godliness is a matter they understand. No. "We always went to church, or chapel; we have never stopped away

in our lives; we are the most regular of religious people, and we were baptized, and we go to the sacrament, and what is there that we do not do? Who convinceth us of any sin? If we are not free of the Celestial City, who can be? Surely — surely we enjoy much of the things of God; we sit in God's house, and we feel a pleasure when we listen to the truth. Sacred song bears us on high as well as other men. We sit as God's people sit, and we hear as God's people hear: surely we are free!" Ah! but, dear friends, a man may think himself free, and be a slave still. You know there are many in this world who dream themselves to be what they are not; and you have a faculty of dreaming in the same manner. Christ must have come to you and shown you your slavery, and broken your heart on account of it, or else you are not free; and you must have looked to the wounds of Jesus as the only gates of your escape, and have seen in his hand the only power which could snap your fetters, or else, though you have professed and re-professed, you are as much slaves of Satan as though you were in the pit itself. Beware, I pray you, of hereditary religion. A man cannot hand down his godliness as he doth his goods; and I cannot receive grace as I may receive lands, or gold, or silver. "Ye must be born again." There must be the going up out of Egypt, the leaving the flesh-pots and the brick-kilns, and advancing through the Red Sea of atonement into the wilderness, and afterwards into the promised rest. Have ye passed from death unto life? If not, beware of having a mere notional, professional liberty.

There are many, too, who have the liberty of *natural self-righteousness* and of *the power of the flesh*. They have fanciful, unfounded hopes of heaven. They have never wronged anybody; they have never done any mischief in the world; they are amiable; they are generous to the poor; they are this, they are that, they are the other; therefore they feel themselves to be free. They never feel their own inability; they can always pray alike and always sing alike; they have no changes; they are not emptied from vessel to vessel; their confidence never wavers; they believe themselves all right, and abide in their

confidence. They do not stop to examine: their delusion is too strong and their comfort is much too precious for them to wish to mar it by looking to its foundation; so they go on, on, on, sound asleep, till one of these days, falling over the awful precipice of ruin, they will wake up where waking will be too late. We know there are some such; they are in God's house, but they are not God's sons. You remember the case of Ishmael; it is to that which our Lord seems to allude here. Ishmael was a son of Abraham according to the flesh, but he never was free. His mother being a bondwoman, he was a slave. He might call himself Abraham's son if he would, but being only after the flesh he was still a slave, for it was not in the power of Abraham, in the power of the flesh, to beget anything but bondage; and Ishmael at his best was still the son of the bondwoman. Yet you see he sits at table, — he eats and drinks just as merrily as the child of the promise. Nay, in some things he is stronger than Isaac; he has the advantage of age, and I dare say plumes himself on being heir. "Ah!" saith he, "I am the elder one of the family." At last he mocked Isaac. When the boys were at their sports he was violent towards his younger brother, even as many Pharisees are very cruel to true believers. What came of it? Why, "the servant abideth not in the house forever, but the son abideth ever;" and so the day came in which Sarah said, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son," and away went Ishmael. He might cling to his father, and say, "I am thy son." "You must go, sir; you are a slave; you were born after the flesh, and therefore you take from your mother your state and condition, and not from your father. Your mother was a bondslave, and so are you, and you must go. The privileges of the children's house are not for you; you must go into the wilderness; you cannot abide here." But Isaac, though feeble and tempted, and tired and vexed, is never sent out of his father's house — never; he abideth ever. This is the position of many. They are very good people in their way. They do their best; but what is their best? It is the offspring of the flesh; and that which is born of the flesh is flesh; consequently their best endeavors only make

them slaves in the house, not sons; only he who is born by faith according to the promise is the free Isaac, and abides in the house. The day will come when God will say to every member of the Christian church, and all who profess religion, "Are ye children by faith in the promise, or not?" For if ye are only children according to the flesh, he will send you back again into the wilderness; to eternal ruin you must go, except the Spirit of God hath given you the spirit of freedom. There was a custom observed among the Greeks and Romans, that when a man died, if he left slaves, they went as a heritage to the elder son; and if the elder son said, "Some of these are my own brethren, though they be slaves; I therefore pronounce them free," they would be free. Emancipation was not always allowed in either Greek or Roman states, — a man might not always set a slave free without giving a good reason; but it was always held to be a valid reason if the son, coming into a heritage of slaves, chose to set them free. No question was asked, if the son made them free; the law did not step in. So, dear friends, if the Son shall make *us* free, *we* shall be free *indeed*. If Jesus Christ, the great heir according to the promise, the great Mediator whom God hath created heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds — if he shall say to us who are as Ishmael, "I make you free," then are we free indeed, and neither law, justice, heaven or hell, can bring any argument against us why we should not be free. But do beware of all imaginary freedoms, and shun them as you would poison, and God give you to enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God.

III. TRUE FREEDOM COMES TO US THROUGH HIM WHO IS, IN THE HIGHEST SENSE, "THE SON." No man getteth free except as he cometh to Christ and taketh him to be his all in all. Thou mayst rivet on thy fetters by going to the law, to thine own good works, to thy willings and thy prayings and thy doings, but thou wilt never be free until thou comest to Christ. Mark thee, man! if thou wilt come to Christ thou shalt be free this moment from every sort of bondage; but if thou wilt go

hither and thither, and try this and that and the other, thou shalt find all thy tryings end in disappointment, and thou shalt lie down in sorrow and in shame; for none but Jesus — none but Jesus can make us free indeed. Real liberty cometh from him only. Let us think awhile of this real liberty. Remember it is a liberty *righteously bestowed.* Christ has a right to make men free. If I should set a slave free who belonged to his master, he might run for a time; but since I had not the power to give him a legal emancipation, he would be dragged back again. But the Son, who is heir of all things, has a right to make him free whom he wills to make free. The law is on Christ's side. Christ hath such power in heaven and earth committed to him, that if he saith to the sinner, "Thou art free," free he is before high heaven. Before God's great bar thou canst plead the word of Jesus, and thou shalt be delivered.

Bethink thee, too, *how dearly this freedom was purchased.* Christ speaks it by his power, but he still bought it by his blood. He makes thee free, sinner, but it is by his own bonds. Thou goest clear, because he bare thy burden for thee. See him bear his agony — "crushed beneath the millstone of the law, till all his head, his hair, his garments bloody be." See him yonder, dragged to Pilate's hall, bound, whipped like a common felon, scourged like a murderer, and dragged away by hell-hounds through the streets, fastened by those cruel fetters which went through his flesh to the accursed wood! See him yielding up his liberty to the dungeon of death! There the Mighty One sleeps in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb. Dearly did he purchase with his own bondage the liberty which he so freely gives. But, though dearly purchased, let us take up that key note — *he freely gives it.* Jesus asks nothing of us as a preparation for this liberty. He finds us sitting in sackcloth and ashes, and bids us put on the beautiful array of freedom; he discovers us in a darkness which may be felt, sitting in the valley of the shadow of death, and he brings the true light in his hand, and turns our midnight into blazing noon, — and all without our help, without our merit, and at first without our will. Christ

saveth sinners just as they are. Christ died not for the righteous, but for the ungodly; and his message is grace, pure grace, undiluted by a single condition or requisition which God might make of man. Just as you are, trust your soul with Christ, and though there be in thee no speck of aught that is good, he will save thee, and give thee perfect liberty. Dearly hath he bought it, but freely doth he give it, even the faith by which we receive is the gift of God.

It is a liberty which may be *instantaneously received.* The captive goes first through one door and then another, and perhaps a hundred keys must grate in the wards of the lock before he feels the cool fresh air gladdening his brow. But it is not so with the man who believeth. The moment thou believest, thou art free. Thou mayst have been chained at a thousand points, but the instant thou believest in Christ thou art unfettered and free as the bird of the air. Not more free is the eagle which mounts to his rocky eyrie, and afterwards outsoars the clouds — even he, the bird of God, is not more unfettered than the soul which Christ hath delivered. Cut are the cords, and in an instant you are clear of all, and upward you mount to God. You may have come in here a slave, and you may go out free. God's grace can in a moment give you the condition of freedom and the nature of it. He can make you say, "Abba, Father," with your whole heart, though up to this day you may have been of your father the devil, and his works you have done. In an instant is it wrought. We are told in tropical lands that the sun seems to leap up from under the horizon, and the dead of night is suddenly turned into the lustre of day: so on a sudden doth God's grace often dawn upon the darkness of sinful hearts. You have seen, mayhap, at times, after showers of rain have fallen upon the earth, how land which seemed all dry and barren was suddenly covered with green grass, with here and there a lily full in bloom; and so a heart which has been like a desert, when once the shower of Jesus' grace falls on it, blossoms like the garden of the Lord, and yieldeth sweet perfume: and that in a moment. You who have given yourselves up in despair;

you who have written your own condemnation; you who have made a league with death and a covenant with hell, and said, "There is no hope, therefore will we go after our iniquities," — I charge you hear me when I declare that my Lord and Master, who has broken my chains and set me free, can break yours too, and that with one blow.

Mark, that if this be done, it is *done forever.* When Christ sets free, no chains can bind again. Let the Master say to me, "Captive, I have delivered thee," and it is done. Come on — come on ye fiends of the pit! Mightier is he who is for us than all they who be against us. Come on — come on temptations of the world; but if the Lord be on our side, whom shall we fear? If he be our defence, who shall be our destruction? Come on — come on ye foul corruptions! Come on ye machinations and temptations of my own deceitful heart! But he who hath begun the good work in me will carry it on, and perfect it to the end. Gather ye, gather ye — gather ye all your hosts together, ye who are the foes of God and the enemies of man, and come at once with concentrated fury and with hellish might against my spirit; but if God acquitteth who is he that condemneth? Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? Yon black stream of death shall never wash out the mark of Christian liberty. That skeleton monarch bears no yoke which he can put upon a believer's neck. We will shout victory when we are breast-deep amidst the last billows, and grapple with the king upon the pale horse: we will throw the rider and win the victory in the last struggle, according as it is written, "Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Sparta and Greece refused to wear the yoke of Persia, and broke the proud king's pomp; but we are free in a nobler sense. We refuse the yoke of Satan, and will overcome his power as Christ overcame it in the days gone by. Let those who will bend and crouch at the foot of the world's monarch; but as for those whom God has made free, they claim to think, to believe, to act, and to be as their divine instinct commands them, and the Spirit of God enables them —

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

IV. And now we put round the QUESTION, Are we free, then, this morning? Are we free? I will not answer it for you, nor need I just now answer for myself; but I would beseech you to make a searching inquiry into it. If you are free, then remember that *you have changed your lodging-place;* for the slave and the son sleep not in the same room of the house. The things which satisfied you when a slave will not satisfy you now. You wear a garment which a slave may never wear, and you feel an instinct within which the slave can never feel. There is an Abba, Father, cry in you, which was not there once. Is it so? Is it so? If you are free, *you live not as you used to do.* You go not to the slave's work; you have not now to toil and sweat to earn the wages of sin, which is death; but now as a son serveth his father, you do a son's work, and you expect to receive a son's reward; for the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. One thing I know: if you are free, then *you are thinking about setting others free;* and if thou hast no zeal for the emancipation of other men, thou art a slave thyself. If thou art free, *thou hatest all sorts of chains,* all sorts of sin, and thou wilt never willingly put on the fetters any more. Thou livest each day, crying unto Him who made thee free at first, to hold thee up that thou fall not into the snare. If thou be free, this is not the world for thee: this is the land of slaves; this is the world of bondage. If thou be free, thy heart has gone to heaven, the land of the free. If thou be free to-day, thy spirit is longing for the time when thou shalt see the great Liberator face to face. If thou be free, thou wilt bide thy time until he call thee; but when he saith, "Friend, come up hither," thou wilt fearlessly mount to the upper spheres, and death and sin shall be no hinderance to thine advent to his glory.

I would we were all free; but if we be not, the next best thing I would is, that those of us who are not free would fret under the fetter: for when the fetters are felt, they shall be

broken; when the iron enters into the soul, it shall be snapped; when you long for liberty, you shall have it; when you seek for it as for hid treasure, and pant for it as the stag for the water-brook, God will not deny you. "Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened; ask, and it shall be given you." God lead you to seek, and knock, and ask now, for Christ's sake. Amen.

SERMON XI.

THE SINNER'S FRIEND.

"A FRIEND OF PUBLICANS AND SINNERS."— Matthew xi. 19

MANY a true word is spoken in jest, and many a tribute to virtue has been unwittingly paid by the sinister lips of malice. The enemies of our Lord Jesus Christ thought to brand him with infamy, hold him up to derision, and hand his name down to everlasting scorn, as "a friend of publicans and sinners." Short-sighted mortals! Their scandal published his reputation. To this day the Saviour is adored by the title which was minted as a slur. It was designed to be a stigma, that every good man would shudder at and shrink from; it has proved to be a fascination which wins the heart and enchants the soul of all the godly. Saints in heaven and saints on earth delight to sing of him thus:

> "Saviour of sinners they proclaim,
> Sinners of whom the chief I am."

What the invidious Jews said in bitter spleen, has been turned by the Holy Spirit to the most gracious account. Where they poured out vials of hate, odors of sacred incense arise. Troubled consciences have found a sweet balm in the very sound. Jesus, "the friend of publicans and sinners," has proved himself friendly to them, and they have become friends with him, — so completely has he justified the very name which his enemies gave him in ribald affront.

We shall take this title of Jesus to-night as an order of dis-

tinction which sets forth his excellency, and as God helps us, we shall try to exalt his name and proclaim his fame, while we attempt to *explain how he was the friend of sinners;* and *how he shows that he is still the same.*

I. Our Lord proved himself in his own time to be the friend of sinners.

What better proof could he give of it than coming from the majesty of his Father's house to the meanness of Bethlehem's manger? What better proof could he give than leaving the society of cherubim and seraphim, to lie in the manger where the horned oxen fed, and to become the associate of fallen men? The incarnation of the Saviour in the very form of sinners, taking upon himself the flesh of sinners, being born of a sinner, having a sinner for his reputed father, — his very being a man, which is tantamount to being in the same form with sinners, — surely this were enough to prove that he is the sinner's friend.

When you take up the roll of his earthly lineage and begin to read it through, you will be struck with the fact that there are but few women mentioned in it; and yet three out of those mentioned were harlots, — so that even in his lineage there was the taint of sin, and a sinner's blood would have run in his veins if he had been the true son of Joseph; but inasmuch as he was begotten by the Holy Ghost, who overshadowed the Virgin, in him was no sin: yet his reputed pedigree ran through the veins of sinners. Tamar, and Rahab, and Bathsheba, are three names which bring to remembrance deeds of shame, and yet these stand in the records as the ancestors of the Son of Mary, the sinner's friend!

As soon as Jesus Christ, being born in the likeness of sinful flesh, has come to years of maturity, and has commenced his real life-work, he at once discloses his friendship for sinners by associating with them. You do not find him standing at a distance, issuing his mandates and his orders to sinners to make themselves better; but you find him coming among them like a good workman who stands over his work. He takes his place where

the sin and the iniquity are, and he personally comes to deal with it. He does not write out a prescription, and send by another hand his medicines with which to heal the sickness of sin; but he comes right into the lazar-house, touches the wounded, looks at the sick: and there is healing in the touch; there is life in the look. The great Physician took upon himself our sicknesses and bare our infirmities, and so proved himself to be really the sinner's friend. Some people appear to like to have a philanthropic love towards the fallen, but yet they would not touch them with a pair of tongs. They would lift them up if they could, but it must be by some machinery — some sort of contrivance by which they would not degrade themselves or contaminate their own hands. Not so the Saviour. Up to the very elbow he seems to thrust that gracious arm of his into the mire, to pull up the lost one out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay. He takes himself the mattock and the spade, and goes to work in the great quarry that he may get out the rough stones, which afterwards he will himself polish with his own bitter tears and bloody sweat, that he may make them fit to shine forever in the glorious temple of the Lord his God. He comes himself into direct, personal contact with sin, without being contaminated with it. He comes as close to it as a man can come. He eats and drinks with sinners. He sits at the Pharisee's table one day, and does not rise because there is a crowd of people no better than they should be coming near him. Another day he goes to the publican's house, and the publican had, no doubt, been a great extortioner in his time; but Jesus sits there, and that day does salvation come to that publican's house. Beloved, this is a sweet trait about Christ, and proves how real and how true was his love, that he made his associations with sinners, and did not shun even the chief of them.

Nay, he not only came among them, but he was always seeking their good by his ministry. If there was anywhere a sinner, a lost sheep of the house of Israel, Christ was after that sinner. Never such an indefatigable shepherd; he sought that which was lost till he found it. One of his earliest works of mercy we

will tell you of in brief. He was once on a journey and Samaria was a little out of his way; but there lived in a city of that country a woman — ah! the less said of her the better. She had had five husbands, and he whom she then had was not her husband, nor were any of the others, either. She was a disgrace to that city of Samaria. But Jesus, who has a keen eye for sinners, and a heart which beats high for them, means to save that woman, and he must and he will have her. Being weary, he sits down on a well to rest. A special providence brings the woman to the well. The conventionalists of society forbid him to talk with her. But he breaks through the narrow bigotry of caste. A Samaritan by birth, he cares not for that; but will that most holy being condescend to have familiar conversation with her — a dishonor to her sex? He will. His disciples may marvel when they come back and find him talking with her, but he will do it. He begins to open up the Word of life to her understanding, and that woman becomes the first Christian missionary we ever hear of, for she ran back to the city, leaving her water-pot, and crying, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" And they came and believed; and there was great joy in that city of Samaria. You know, too, that there was another sinner. He was a bad fellow — I fear him. He had been constantly grinding the faces of the poor, and getting more out of them by way of taxation than he should have done; but the little man had the bump of curiosity, and he must needs see the preacher, and the preacher must needs love him; for I say there was a wonderful attraction in Jesus to a sinner. That sinner's heart was like a piece of iron: Christ's heart was like a load stone; and wherever there was a sinner the loadstone began to feel it, and soon the sinner began to feel the loadstone too. "Zaccheus," said Christ, "make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house;" and down comes the sinner, and salvation has come to his house at that hour. Oh! Christ never seemed to preach so sweetly as when he was preaching a sinner's sermon. I would have loved to have seen that dear face of his when he cried, "Come unto

me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" or, better still, to have seen his eyes running with whole showers of tears when he said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem .... how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" or even to have heard him preach those three great sermons upon sinners, when he described the woman as sweeping the house and taking away the dust that she might find the lost piece of her money; and the shepherd going from hill to hill after the wandering sheep; and the father running to meet that rag-clad prodigal, — kissing him with the kisses of love, clothing him with the best robe, and inviting him into the feast, while they did dance and make merry because the lost was found, and he who was dead was alive again. Why, he was the mightiest of preachers for sinners, beyond a doubt. Oh, how he loved them! Never mind the Pharisees; he has thunderbolts for them. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees!" But when publicans and harlots come, he always has the gate of mercy ajar for them. For them he always has some tender word, some loving saying, such as this: "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men;" or such-like words of tender wooing. The very chief of sinners was thus drawn into the circle of his disciples.

And you know, dear friends, he did not prove his love merely by preaching to them, and living with them, and by his patience in enduring their contradiction against himself, and all their evil words and deeds; but he proved it by his prayers too. He used his mighty influence with the Father in their behalf. He took their polluted names on his holy lips; he was not ashamed to call them brethren. Their cause became his own, and in their interest his pulse throbbed. How many times on the cold mountains he kept his heart warm with love to them! How often the sweat rolled down his face when he was in an agony of spirit for them I cannot tell you. This much I do know, that on that self-same night, when he sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, he prayed this prayer, — after having

prayed for his saints, he went on to say: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." Here, truly, the heart of the Saviour was bubbling up and welling over towards sinners. And you never can forget that almost his last words were, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Though wilfully and wickedly they pierced his hands and his feet, yet were there no angry words, but only that short, loving, hearty prayer: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Ah, friends! if there ever was a man who was a friend to others, Jesus was a friend to sinners his whole life through.

This, however, is but little. As for the river of the Saviour's love to sinners, I have only brought you to its banks. You have but stood on the bank and dipped your feet in the flood; but now prepare to swim. So fond was he of sinners, that he made his grave with the wicked. He was numbered with the transgressors. God's fiery sword was drawn to smite a world of sinners down to hell. It must fall on those sinners. But Christ loves them. His prayers stay the arm of God a little while, but still the sword must fall in due time. What is to be done? By what means can they be rescued? Swifter than the lightning's flash, I see that sword descending. But what is that in vision I behold? It falls — but where? Not on the neck of sinners. It is not their neck which is broken by its cruel edge; it is not their heart which bleeds beneath its awful force. No; the "friend of sinners" has put himself into the sinner's place! and then, as if he had been the sinner, though in him was no sin, he suffers, bleeds, and dies; — no common suffering, no ordinary bleeding, no death such as mortals know. It was a death in which the second death was comprehended, — a bleeding in which the very veins of God were emptied. The God-man divinely suffered. I know not how else to express the suffering. It was a more than mortal agony; for the divine strengthened the human, and the man was made vast and mighty to endure through his being a God. Being God and man, he endured more than ten thousand millions of men all put together could have suffered. He

endured, indeed, the hells of all for whom he died, — the torments, or the equivalent for the torments, which all of them ought to have suffered, — the eternal wrath of God condensed and put into a cup too bitter for mortal tongue to know, and then drained to its utmost dregs by the loving lips of Jesus. Beloved, this was love. "Herein is love, that while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." This Christ has done, and he is, therefore, demonstrated to be the friend of sinners.

But the trial is over; the struggle is past; the Saviour is dead and buried. He rises again, and after he has spent forty days on earth — in that forty days proving still his love for sinners — he rose again for their justification. I see him ascending up on high. Angels attend him as the clouds receive him.

> "They bring his chariot from on high,
> To bear him to his throne;
> Clap their triumphant wings, and cry,
> 'The glorious work is done!'"

What pomp! What a procession! What splendor! He will forget his poor friends the sinners now, will he not? Not he! I think I hear the song, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in." The bars of massy light are all unloosed; the pearly gates are all wide open flung; and as he passes through, mark you, the highest joy which swells his soul is that he has opened those gates, not for himself, — for they were never shut on him, — but that he has opened them for sinners. It was for this, indeed, he died; and it is for this that he ascends on high, that he may "open the kingdom of heaven for all believers." See him as he rides through heaven's streets! "Thou hast ascended up on high; thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts of man." Ah! but hear the refrain, — for this is the sweetest note of all the hymn, — "Yea, for the rebellious also — yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." The scat-

tered gifts of his coronation, the lavish bounties of his ascension, are still for sinners. He is exalted on high — for what? To give repentance and remission of sins. He still wears upon his breastplate the names of sinners; upon his hands and upon his heart does he still bear the remembrance of those sinners; and every day for the sinner's sake he doth not hold his peace, and for the sinner's sake he doth not rest, but cries unto God until every sinner shall be brought safely home. Every sinner who believeth, every sinner who was given to him, every sinner whom he bought with blood — he will not rest, I say, till all such are gathered to be the jewels of his crown, world without end.

Methinks we cannot say more; and I think you will say we could not have said less concerning the way in which the Saviour proved himself to be the sinner's friend. If there are any of you who dare to doubt him after this, I know not what further to advance. If there can be one who has proved himself your friend, surely Jesus did it; and he is willing to receive you now. What he has done he still continues to do. Oh, that you might have grace to perceive that Jesus is the lover of your soul! — that you might find the blessedness which all these tokens of friendship of which we have been speaking have brought for believing sinners!

II. While we change the subject a little, we shall still keep to the text, and notice WHAT CHRIST IS DOING NOW FOR SINNERS.

There is a deep principle involved here, — a principle the Pharisee of old could not understand, — and the cold heart of humanity is slow to embrace it to-day. I have two explanations to offer of the way in which Jesus personally discovers himself to be the friend of sinners, and I will just mention these before I come to the application of the subject I intend. Once upon a time a woman was brought to Jesus by the Scribes and Pharisees: she was an adulteress; she had been taken in the very act. They tell "the sinner's friend" what sentence Moses would

pronounce in such a case, and they ask him, How sayest thou? This they said tempting him. They were not much concerned about the unhappy creature; the accusation they were intent to lay was against the man of Nazareth. You know how he disposed of the case, and put her accusers out of countenance. He did not bring the sinner up before the magistrate; nay, he would not act the judge's part, and pronounce sentence; rather would he act the neighbor's part: he acquitted himself as a friend. There is a proverb among a certain class of hard-dealing tradesmen, "We know no friendship in business;" and full well they carry it out, while they grind the faces of the poor without pity, and strive to overreach one another without fairness. And there was, in like manner, no friendship, no mercy whatever, among those gentlemen of the long robe. Righteousness, to their idea, stood in exacting justice with rigid severity; and as for wickedness, it was only shameful when it was found out. She who was taken in the act must be stoned. They who had done it secretly must prosecute. The real friendship of Jesus appears in his singling of pity; and where they accused him of winking at crime, and harboring the criminal, he was truly laying the axe at the root of the tree, and sheltering the victims, while he upbraided the arrogant rulers, whose secret vices were the genuine cause of the wretchedness which had fallen upon the dregs of the nation. I commend this thought to your consideration. When it is said of him, he is a "friend of publicans and sinners," it was implied that he was not a friend of Scribes and Pharisees. Yet again, I want you to notice that the office which Christ came to fulfil towards sinners was that of pure, unmingled friendship. Let us give you an illustration. There is an awful story abroad: a murder has been committed; and the poor wretch who committed it has cut his own throat. The policeman and the surgeon are quickly on the spot. The one comes there in the interest of law, the other attends in the interest of humanity. Says the officer of police: "Man, you are my prisoner;" says the doctor: "My dear fellow, you are my patient." And now he lays a delicate hand upon the wound: he

stanches the blood, applies soft liniments, binds it up with plasters, and, bending down his ear, listens to the man's breathing; taking hold of his hand, he feels his pulse: gently raising his head, he administers to him some wine or stimulant; takes him to the hospital, gives the nurse instructions to watch him, and orders that he shall be given nutritious diet as he is able to bear it. Day after day he still visits him, and uses all his skill and all his diligence to heal the man's wounds. Is that the way to deal with criminals? Certainly it is not the manner in which the police deal. Their business is to find out all the traces and evidences of his guilt. But the medical attendant is not concerned with the man as an evil-doer, but as a sufferer. So is it with the sinner. Moses is the officer of justice who comes to arrest him. Christ is the good Physician who comes to heal him. He says, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help." He deals with the disease, with the wounds, with the sufferings of sinners. He is therefore their friend. Of course the parallel will only go a little way. In the instance of the murderer, the surgeon would hand his patient over to the officers as soon as the wound was recovered; but in the conduct of our Saviour, he redeems the soul from under the law, and delivers it from the penalty of sin, as well as restores it from the self-inflicted injuries. But oh! if I could but show thee that Christ treats the sinner with pity rather than with indignation; that the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them; that his visit to our world was mediatorial — not to condemn the world, but to give his life a ransom for many; surely then thou wouldst see reason enough why the sinner should look to him as a friend indeed.

Ah! then I would go further. I would entreat thee to make the case thine own. Thou art a sinner; can I not convince thee that he is thy friend?

You were sick the other day. The physician looked very grave, and whispered something to your wife. She did not tell you what it was; but your own life trembled in the scale, and it is a wonder you are here to-night. Shall I tell you why you

are here? Do you see that tree yonder? It has been standing in its place for many years, but it has never yielded any fruit, and several times the master of the garden has said, "Cut it down." The other day the woodman came with his axe: he felt its edge; it was sharp and keen enough, and he began to cut, and the chips were flying, and he made a deep gash. But the gardener came by, — one who had watched over the tree, and had hope of it even yet, — and he said, "Spare it — spare it yet a little longer; the wound thou hast made may heal; and I will dig about it, and dung it, and if it bring forth fruit, well. Spare it another year, and if not, then cut it down." That tree is yourself. The woodman is Death. That chipping at the trunk of the tree was your sickness. Jesus is he who spared you. You had not been here to-night — you had been there in hell among damned spirits, howling in unutterable woe — if it had not been that the friend of sinners had spared your life.

And where are you to-night? Perhaps, my hearers, you are in an unusual place for you. Your Sunday evenings are not often spent in the house of God. There are other places which know you, but your seat there is empty to-night. There has been much persuasion to bring you here, and it may be that you have come against your will; but some friend has asked you to conduct him to the spot, and here you are. Do you know why you are here? It is a friendly providence, managed by the sinner's friend, which has brought you here, that you may hear the sound of mercy, and have a loving invitation tendered to you. Be grateful to the Saviour that he has brought you to the gospel-pool. May you — oh, may you this night be made to step in and be washed from sin! But it is kind of him, and proves how true a friend he is of sinners, that he has brought you here. I will leave you now where you are, and I will tell you how he has dealt with other sinners; for mayhap this may lead you to ask him to deal the same with you.

I know a sinner — while I live I must know him. Full well do I remember him when he was hard of heart and an enemy to God by a multitude of wicked works. But this friend of

sinners loved him; and passing by one day, he looked right into his soul with such a look that his hard heart began to break. There were deep throes, as though a birth of a divine sort were coming on. There was an agony, and there was a grief unutterable; and that poor soul did not think it kind of Jesus: but indeed it was kindness too intense ever fully to estimate; for there is no saving a soul except by making it feel its need of being saved. There must be in the work of grace an emptying and a pulling down before there can be a filling and a building up. That soul knew no peace for many a year, and the sole of its foot had no rest. But one day —

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Come unto me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one — lay down
Thy head upon my breast.
I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad;
I found in him a resting-place,
And he has made me glad!

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Behold, I freely give
The living water — thirsty one,
Stoop down and drink, and live!
I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in him.

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
I am this dark world's light;
Look unto me — thy morn shall rise,
And all thy days be bright!
I looked to Jesus, and I found
In him my star, my sun;
And in that light of light I'll walk,
Till travelling days are done."

Ay, said I, Christ is the friend of sinners. So say I, and so will I say while this poor lisping, stammering tongue can articulate a sound. And methinks God had a design of abundant

mercy when he saved my soul. I had not then believed it, though a mother's loving accents might have whispered it in my ears. But he seems to remind me of it over and over again, till love and terror mingle in my breast, saying, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." O my blessed Master! thou dost trust my lips when thou dost bear witness to my heart. Thou givest charge to my tongue when thou constrained my soul. "Am I a chosen vessel?" It is to bear his name to sinners. As a full bottle seeks vent, so must my testimony pant for utterance. O sinner! if thou trustest Him, he will be such a friend to thee! and if thou hast now a broken heart and a contrite spirit, these are his work; and it is a proof of his great love to thee if he has made thee to hunger and thirst after him.

Let me impress upon you that Jesus is the friend of the friendless. She who had spent all her money on physicians without getting relief, obtained a cure *gratis* when she came to him. He who hath "nothing to pay" gets all his debts cancelled by this friend. And he who was ready to perish with hunger, finds not only a passing meal, but a constant supply at his hands.

We know of a place in England, still existing, where there is a dole of bread served to every passer-by who chooses to ask for it. Whoever he may be, he has but to knock at the door of St. Cross Hospital, and there is the dole of bread for him. Jesus Christ so loveth sinners that he has built a St. Cross Hospital, so that, whenever a sinner is hungry, he has but to knock and have his wants supplied. Nay, he has done better; he has attached to this hospital of the cross a bath; and whenever a soul is black and filthy, it has but to go there and be washed. The fountain is always full, always efficacious. There is no sinner who ever went into it and found it, could not wash away his stains. Sins which were scarlet and crimson have all disappeared, and the sinner has been whiter than snow. As if this were not enough, there is attached to this hospital of the cross a wardrobe; and a sinner, making application simply as a sinner, with nothing in his hand, but being just empty and naked, he may come and be clothed from head to foot. And if he wishes

to be a soldier, he may not merely have an under-garment, but he may have armor which shall cover him from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. Nay, if he wants a sword he shall have that given to him, and a shield too. There is nothing that his heart can desire, that is good for him, which he shall not receive. He shall have spending-money so long as he lives, and he shall have an eternal heritage of glorious treasure when he enters into the joy of his Lord.

Beloved, I cannot tell you all that Christ has done for sinners; but this I know, that if he meets with you to-night, and becomes your friend, he will stand by you to the last. He will go home with you to-night. No matter how many pairs of stairs you have to go up, Jesus will go with you. No matter if there be no chair to sit down on, he will not disdain you. You shall be hard at work to-morrow, but as you wipe the sweat from your brow he shall stand by you. You will, perhaps, be despised for his sake; but he will not forsake you. You will, perhaps, have days of sickness; but he will come and make your bed in your sickness for you. You will, perhaps, be poor; but your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure; for he will provide for you. You will vex him much and grieve his Spirit. You will often doubt him — you will go after other lovers. You will provoke him to jealousy, but he will never cease to love you. You will, perhaps, grow cold to him, and even forget his dear name for a time; but he will never forget you. You may, perhaps, dishonor his cross, and damage his fair fame among the sons of men; but he will never cease to love you: nay, he will never love you less — he cannot love you more. This night he doth espouse himself unto you. Faith shall be the wedding-ring which he will put upon your finger. He plights his troth to you.

> "Though you should him ofttimes forget,
> His loving-kindness fast is set."

His heart shall be so true to you that he will never leave you nor forsake you. You will come to die soon; but the friend of sinners, who loved you as a sinner and would not cast you off

when your sinnership kept breaking up, will still be with you when you come to the sinner's doom, which is to die. I see you going down the shelving banks of Jordan, but the sinner's friend goes with you. Ah, dear heart! he will put his arm beneath you, and bid you fear not; and when in the thick shades of that grim night you expect to see a fearful visage, — the grim face of Death, — you shall see, instead thereof — you shall see his sweet and smiling face, bright as an evening star, by your soul, and you shall hear him say, "Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed; I am thy God." You will land in the world of spirits by-and-by; but will the sinner's friend forsake you then? No; he will be pleased to own you; he will meet you on the other side the Jordan, and he will say, "Come, my beloved, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and have bought thee, though thou wast a sinner vile, and now I am not ashamed to confess thee before my holy angels; nay, come with me, and I will take thee to my Father's face, and will confess thee there." And when the day shall come in which the world shall be judged, he will be thy friend then. Thou shalt sit on the bench with him. At the right hand of the Judge shalt thou stand, accepted in him who was thine Advocate, and who is now thy Judge to acquit thee. And when the splendors of the millennium shall come, thou shalt partake of them; and when the end shall be, and the world shall be rolled up like a worn-out vesture, and these arching skies shall have passed away like a forgotten dream; when eternity with its deep-sounding waves shall break upon the rocks of time and sweep them away forever, — then, on that sea of glass mingled with fire, thou shalt stand with Christ, thy friend still, owning thee notwithstanding all thy misbehavior in the world which has gone, and loving thee now — loving thee on as long as eternity shall last. Oh! what a friend is Christ to sinners — to sinners!

Now, do recollect that we have been talking about sinners. There is a notion abroad that Jesus Christ came into the world to save respectable people, and that he will save decent sort of folks; that those of you who go regularly to a place of worship, and are good sort of people, will be saved. Now, Jesus Christ

came into the world to save sinners; and who does that mean? Well, it includes some of us who have not been permitted to go into outward sin; but it also includes within its deep, broad compass those who have gone to the utmost extent of iniquity.

Talk of sinners! Walk the streets by moonlight, if you dare, and you will see sinners then. Watch when the night is dark, and the wind is howling, and the picklock is grating in the door, and you will see sinners then. Go to yon jail, and walk through the wards, and see the men with heavy, overhanging brows, — men whom you would not like to meet out at night, — and there are sinners there. Go to the reformatories, and see those who have betrayed an early and a juvenile depravity, and you will see sinners there. Go across the seas to the place where a man will gnaw a bone upon which is reeking human flesh, and there is a sinner there. Go you where you will, and ransack earth to find sinners, for they are common enough: you may find them in every lane and street of every city and town and village and hamlet. It is for such that Jesus died. If you will select me the grossest specimen of humanity, if he be but born of woman, I will have hope of him yet, because the gospel of Christ is come to sinners, and Jesus Christ is come to seek and to save sinners. Electing love has selected some of the worst to be made the best. Redeeming love has bought, specially bought, many of the worst to be the reward of the Saviour's passion. Effectual grace calls out and compels to come in many of the vilest of the vile: and it is therefore that I have tried to-night to preach my Master's love to sinners.

Oh! by that love, looking out of those eyes in tears; oh! by that love, streaming from those wounds flowing with blood; by that faithful love, that strong love, that pure, disinterested, and abiding love; oh! by the heart and by the bowels of the Saviour's compassion, I do conjure you turn not away as though it were nothing to you: but believe on him and you shall be saved! Trust your souls with him, and he will bring you to his Father's right hand in glory everlasting.

May God give us a blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

SERMON XII.

ELECTION NO DISCOURAGEMENT TO SEEKING SOULS

"I WILL BE GRACIOUS UPON WHOM I WILL BE GRACIOUS, AND WILL SHOW MERCY UPON WHOM I WILL SHOW MERCY."—Exodus xxxiii. 19.

BECAUSE God is the maker and creator and sustainer of all things, he has a right to do as he wills with all his works. "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" God's absolute supremacy and unlimited sovereignty naturally flow from his omnipotence, and from the fact that he is the source and support of all things. Moreover, if it were not so, the superlative excellence of the divine character would entitle him to absolute dominion. He should be chief who is best. He who *cannot* err, being perfect in wisdom; he who *will* not err, being as perfect in holiness; he who can do no wrong, being supremely just; he who must act in accordance with the principles of kindness, seeing he is essentially love, is the most fitting person to rule. Tell me not of the creatures ruling themselves: what a chaos were this! Talk not of a supposed republic of all created existences, controlling and guiding themselves. All the creatures put together, with their combined wisdom and goodness, — if, indeed, it were not combined folly and wickedness, — all these, I say, with all the excellencies of knowledge, judgment, and love, which the most fervid imagination can suppose them to possess, could not make the equal of that great God whose name is holiness, whose essence is love, to whom all power belongeth, and

to whom alone wisdom is to be ascribed. Let *him* reign supreme, for he is infinitely superior to all other existences. Even if he did not actually reign, the suffrages of all wise men would choose the Lord Jehovah to be absolute monarch of the universe; and if he were not already King of kings and Lord of lords, doing as he wills among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of this lower world, it were the path of wisdom to lift him up to that throne. Since men have sinned, there becomes a yet further reason, or rather a wider scope for the display of sovereignty. The creature, as a creature, may be supposed to have some claim upon the Creator; at least, it may expect that he shall not make it intentionally and despotically to put it to pain; that he shall not arbitrarily, and without cause or necessity, cause its existence to be one of misery. I will not venture to judge the Lord, but I do think it is altogether incompatible with his goodness that he should have made a creature, and, as a creature, have condemned it to misery. Justice seems to demand that there shall be no punishment where there is no sin. But man has lost all his rights as a creature. If he ever had any, he has sinned them away. Our first parents have sinned, and we, their children, have attainted ourselves, by high treason against our liege Lord and Sovereign. All that a just God owes to any one of us on the footing of our own claim, is wrath and displeasure. If he should give to us our due, we should no longer remain on praying ground, breathing the air of mercy. The creature, before its Creator, must now be silent as to any demands upon him; it cannot require anything of him as a matter of right. If the Lord willeth to show mercy, it shall be so; but, if he withholds it, who can call him to account? "Can I not do as I will with mine own?" is a fit reply to all such arrogant inquiries; for man has sinned himself out of court, and there remains no right of appeal from the sentence of the Most High. Man is now in the position of a condemned criminal, whose only right is to be taken to the place of execution, and justly to suffer the due reward of his sins. Whatever difference of opinion, then, there might have been about the sovereignty of God as exercised upon

creatures in the pure mass, there should be none, and there will be none, except in rebellious spirits, concerning the sovereignty of God over rebels who have sinned themselves into eternal ruin, and have lost all their claim even to mercy, much more the love of their offended Creator.

However, whether we all of us agree to the doctrine that God is sovereign or not, is a very little matter to him; for *he is so*. *De jure*, by right, he should be so; *de facto*, as matter of fact, he is so. It is a fact, concerning which you have only to open your eyes and see that God acts as a sovereign in the dispensation of his grace. Our Saviour, when he wished to quote instances of this, spake on this wise: Many widows there were in Israel in the time of Elias the prophet, but unto none of these was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman who was a widow. Here was election. Elias is not sent to nourish and to be nourished by an Israelitish widow; but to a poor idolatress across the border, the blessing of the prophet's company is graciously granted. Again, our Saviour says: "Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them were cleansed, save only Naaman the Syrian," — not an Israelite at all, but one who bowed in the house of Rimmon. See how distinguishing grace finds out strange objects! Although our Saviour only gave these two instances, and no more, because they sufficed for his purpose, there are thousands of such cases on record. Look at man and the fallen angels. How is it that fallen angels are condemned to endless fire, and reserved in chains of darkness unto the great day? There is no Saviour for angels; no precious blood was ever shed for Satan. Lucifer falls, and falls forever, — never to hope again. There is no dispensation of mercy to those nobler spirits; but man, who was made lower than the angels, is selected to be the object of divine redemption. What a great deep is here! This is a most illustrious and indisputable instance of the exercise of the prerogatives of divine sovereignty. Look, again, at the nations of the earth. Why is the gospel preached to-day to us, Englishmen? We have committed as many offences — I will even venture to say

we have perpetrated as many political crimes — as other nations. Our eye is always prejudiced towards everything which is English; but if we read our history fairly, we can discover in the past, and detect in the present, grave and serious faults which disgrace our national banner. To pass by as minor offences the late barbarities in Japan, and our frequent wars of extermination in New Zealand, and at the Cape, let it crimson the cheek of every inhabitant of the British Isles when we do but hint at the opium traffic with China. Yet to us the gospel is graciously sent, so that few nations enjoy it so fully as we do. It is true that Prussia and Holland hear the Word, and that Sweden and Denmark are comforted by the truth; but their candle burns but dimly: it is a poor flickering lamp which cheers their darkness, while in our own dear land, partly from the fact of our religious liberty, and yet more graciously through the late revival, the sun of the gospel shines brightly, and men rejoice in the light of day. Why this? Why no grace for the Japanese? Why no gospel preached to the inhabitants of Central Africa? Why was not the truth of God displayed in the Cathedral of Santiago, instead of the mummeries and follies which disgraced both dupes and deceivers, and were the incidental cause of the horrible burnings of that modern Tophet? Why to-day is not Rome, instead of being the seat of the beast, become the throne of Jesus Christ? I cannot tell you. But assuredly, divine sovereignty, passing by many races of men, has been pleased to pitch upon the Anglo-Saxon family, that they may be as the Jews were aforetime, the custodians of divine truth, and the favorites of mighty grace.

We need not further speak upon national elections, for the principle is plainly carried out in individuals. See ye anything, my brethren, in that rich publican, whose coffers are gorged with the results of his extortion, when he climbs the sycamore tree that his short stature may not prevent his seeing the Saviour — see ye anything in him why the Lord of glory should halt beneath that sycamore tree and say, "Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house"? Can you

find me a reason why yonder adulterous woman, who has had five husbands, and who is now living with a man who is not her husband, should constrain the Saviour to journey through Samaria that he might tell her of the water of life? If *you* can see anything, I cannot. Look at that blood-thirsty Pharisee, hurrying to Damascus with authority to hale men and women to prison and shed their blood. The heat of midday cannot stop him, for his heart is hotter with religious rage than the sun with noontide rays. But see! He is arrested in his career! A brightness shines round about him! Jesus speaks from heaven the words of tender rebuke; and Saul of Tarsus becomes Paul, the apostle of God. Why? Wherefore? What answer can we give but this? "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." Read the "Life of John Newton;" had he not ripened into the grossest of all villains? Turn to the history of John Bunyan, by his own confession the lowest of all blackguards, and tell me, can you find in either of these offenders any sort of reason why the Lord should have chosen them to be among the most distinguished heralds of the cross? No man in his senses will venture to assert that there was anything in Newton or Bunyan why they should engross the regard of the Most High. It was sovereignty, and nothing but sovereignty. Take your own case, dear friends, and that shall be the most convincing of all to you. If you know anything of your own heart, if you have formed a right estimate of our own character, if you have seriously considered your own position before the Most High, the reflection that God loveth you with an everlasting love, and that, therefore, with the bands of his kindness he has drawn you, will draw forth from you at once the exclamation, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for truth's sake." Brethren! the whole world is full of instances of divine sovereignty, for in every conversion some beam of the absolute dominion of God shines forth upon mankind.

When a sinner is anxiously disturbed about his soul's affairs, his chief and main thought should not be upon this subject; when a man would escape from wrath and attain to heaven, his

first, his last, his middle thought should be the cross of Christ. As an awakened sinner, I have vastly less to do with the secret purposes of God than with his revealed commands. For a man to say, "Thou commandest all men to repent, yet will I not repent, because I do not know that I am chosen to eternal life," is not only unreasonable, but exceedingly wicked. That it is unreasonable you will clearly see on a moment's reflection. I know that bread does not of itself nourish my body, "For man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." It depends, therefore, upon God's decree whether that bread shall nourish my body or not; for if he has not purposed that it shall, it may even choke me, and so become rather the cause of my death than the staff of my life. Do I therefore, when I am hungry, thrust my hands into my pockets, and stand still, and refuse to help myself from the well-loaded table, because I do not know whether God has decreed that the bread shall nourish me or not? If I did, I should be an idiot or madman; or if, in my senses, I should starve myself on such a pretence, I should richly deserve the burial of a suicide. I am not absolutely sure that there will be a harvest upon my field next year: unless God has ordained that the corn shall spring up and shall ripen, all my husbandry will be labor lost. There are worms in the earth, frosts in the air, birds in the sky, mildews in the winds, — all of which may destroy my corn, and I may lose every single grain of the handsful which I throw into my furrows. Shall I, therefore, leave my farm to be one perpetual fallow, because I do not know whether God has decreed that there shall be a harvest or not next year? If I become a bankrupt, if I am unable to pay my rent, if the thorn and the thistle grow taller and higher, and if at last my landlord thrusts me from my tenancy, all that men will say will be, "It serves him right!" because I was such a fool as to make the secret purposes of God a matter of paramount consideration, instead of performing my known duty. I am ill and sick. A physician comes to me with medicine. I am not clear that his medicine will heal me; it has healed a great many others: but

if God has decreed that I shall die, I shall die, let me take any quantity of physic, or take none at all. My arm mortifies, but I will not have it cut off, because I do not know whether God has decreed that I shall die of mortification or not. Who but a crazed idiot, or raving maniac, would talk thus? When I put the case in that light, you all reply, "Nobody ever talks in that way; it is too absurd." Of course nobody does. And the fact is, even in the things of God, nobody really does argue in that way. A man may *say*, "I will not believe in Christ, because I am afraid I am not elected;" but the thing is so stupid, so absurd, that I do not believe that any man, not absolutely demented, can be so grossly foolish as to *believe* in his own reasoning. I am far rather inclined to think that is a wicked and perverse method of endeavoring to stultify conscience, on the theory that a bad excuse is better than none, and that even a foolish argument is better than having one's mouth shut in speechless confusion.

But, since men will everlastingly be getting to this point, and there are so many who are always giving this as a reason why they do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, because "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," I shall try, this morning, to talk with these people on their own ground; and I shall endeavor, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to show that the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, so far from discouraging anybody, has not in it, if regarded aright, any sort of discouragement whatever for any souls believing in Jesus Christ.

For one moment let me detain you from my object, while I reply to a very common method of misrepresenting the doctrine. It may be as well to start with a clear idea of what the doctrine really is. Our opponents put the case thus: Suppose a father should condemn some of his children to extreme misery, and make others supremely happy, out of his own arbitrary will, would it be right and just? Would it not be brutal and detestable? My answer is, *of course it would;* it would be execrable in the highest degree: and far, very far be it from us to impute

such a course of action to the Judge of all the earth. But the case stated is not at all the one under consideration, but one as opposite from it as light from darkness. Sinful man is not now in the position of a well-deserving or innocent child, neither does God occupy the place of a complacent parent. We will suppose another case, far nearer the mark; indeed, it is no supposition, but an exact description of the whole matter. A number of criminals, guilty of the most aggravated and detestable crimes, are righteously condemned to die; and die they must, unless the king shall exercise the prerogative vested in him, and give them a free pardon. If, for good and sufficient reasons, known only to himself, the king chooses to forgive a certain number, and to leave the rest for execution, is there anything cruel or unrighteous here? If, by some wise means, the ends of justice can be even better answered by the sparing of the pardoned ones than by their condemnation, while at the same time the punishment of some tends to honor the justice of the lawgiver, who shall dare to find fault? None, I venture to say, but those who are the enemies of the state and of the king. And so may we well ask, "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." "What if God, willing to show his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" Who is he that shall impugn the mingled mercy and severity of Heaven, or make the eternal God an offender, because "he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy"? Let us now proceed to our proper subject, and endeavor to clear this truth from the terrors supposed to cluster round it.

I. Let us begin with this assertion, which we are absolutely sure is correct: THIS DOCTRINE DOES NOT OPPOSE ANY COMFORT DERIVED FROM OTHER SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS.

This doctrine, stern as it may seem to be, does not oppose the consolation which may be rightly derived from any other truth of

revelation. Those who hold the free-will theory, say that our doctrine that salvation is of the Lord alone, and that he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, takes away from man the comfort derivable from *God's goodness*. God is good, infinitely good in his nature. God is love: he willeth not the death of any, but had rather that all should come to repentance. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he should turn unto me and live." Our friends very properly insist upon it that God is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works; that the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. Let me assure them that we shall never quarrel on these points, for we also rejoice in the same facts. Some of you have listened to my voice for these ten years. I ask you whether you have heard me utter a single sentence which at all contradicts the doctrine of God's great goodness? You may have so construed it by mistake, but no such teaching has passed my lip. Do I not, again and again, assert the universal benevolence of God — the infinite and overflowing goodness of the heart of the Most High? If any man can preach upon the great text, "God is love," though I may not be able to preach with the same eloquence, I will venture to vie with him in the decision, heartiness, delight, earnestness, and plainness with which he may expound his theme, be he who he may, or what he may. There is not the slightest shadow of a conflict between God's sovereignty and God's goodness. He may be a sovereign, and yet it may be absolutely certain that he will always act in the way of goodness and love. It is true that he will do as he wills; and yet it is quite certain that he always wills to do that which, in the widest view of it, is good and gracious. If the sons of sorrow fetch any comfort from the goodness of God, the doctrine of election will never stand in their way. Only, mark, it does with a two-edged sword cut to pieces that false confidence in God's goodness which sends so many souls to hell. We have heard dying men singing themselves into the bottomless pit with this lullaby, "Yes, sir, I am a sinner; but God is merciful; God is good." Ah, dear

friends! let such remember that God is just as well as good, and that he will by no means spare the guilty, except through the great atonement of his Son Jesus Christ. The doctrine of election in a most blessedly honest manner, does come in, and breaks the neck, once for all, of all this false and groundless confidence in the uncovenanted mercy of God. Sinner, you have no right to trust to the goodness of God out of Christ. There is no word in the whole Book of inspiration which gives the shadow of a hope to the man who will not believe in Jesus Christ. It says of him, "He that believeth not shall be damned." It declares of you, who are resting upon such a poor confidence as the unpromised favor of Heaven, "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, Jesus Christ the righteous." If this be an evil to rob you of a false refuge, the doctrine of election certainly does this; but from the comfort properly derivable from the largest view of God's bounteous goodness and unlimited love, election does not detract a single grain.

Much comfort, too, flows to a troubled conscience from *the promise that God will hear prayer.* "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." If you ask anything of God in the name of Jesus Christ, you shall receive it. Now, there are some who imagine that they must not pray, because they do not know whether they are God's chosen people. If you refuse to pray on the ground of such bad reasoning as this, you must do so at your own expense; but do mark our solemn assurance, for which we have God's warrant, that there is nothing in the sovereignty of God which at all militates against the great truth, that every sincerely seeking soul, craving divine grace by humble prayer through Jesus Christ, shall be a finder. There may be an Arminian brother here who would like to get into this pulpit and preach the cheering truth that God hath not said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain. We not only accord him full liberty to preach this doctrine, but we will go as far as he can, and perhaps a little fur-

ther, in the enunciation of that truth. We cannot perceive any discrepancy between personal election and the prevalence of prayer. Let those who can, vex their brains with the task of reconciling them; to us the wonder is how a man can believe the one without the other. Firmly must I believe that the Lord God will show mercy to whom he will show mercy, and have compassion on whom he will have compassion; but I know as assuredly that wherever there is a genuine prayer, God gave it; that wherever there is a seeker, God made him seek; consequently, if God has made the man seek and made the man pray, there is evidence at once of divine election; and the fact stands true that none seek who shall not find.

Very much comfort, also, is supposed to be derived, and naturally so, from *the free invitations of the gospel.* "Ah!" cries one, "what a sweet thing it is that the Saviour cried, 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest'! How delightful to read such a word as this: 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price'! Sir, my heart is encouraged when I find it written, 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' But, sir, I dare not come because of the doctrine of election." My dear hearer, I would not say anything harshly to you, but I must express my conviction that this is nothing but an idle excuse for not doing what you have no mind to do; because invitations of the most general character, nay, invitations which shall be universal in their scope, are perfectly consistent with the election of God. I have preached here, you know it, invitations as free as those which proceeded from the lips of Master John Wesley. Van Armin himself, the founder of the Arminian school, could not more honestly have pleaded with the very vilest of the vile to come to Jesus than I have done. Have I therefore felt in my mind that there was a contradiction here? No; nothing of the kind: because I know it to be my duty to sow beside all waters, and, like the sower in the parable, to scatter the seed upon the stony ground, as well

as upon the good land, knowing that election does not narrow the gospel-call, which is universal, but only affects the effectual call, which is and must be particular; which effectual call is no work of mine, seeing that it cometh from the Spirit of God My business is to give the general call, — the Holy Spirit will see to its application to the chosen. Oh, my dear hearers! God's invitations are honest invitations to every one of you. He invites you; in the words of the parable, he addresses you, "All things are ready; come ye to the supper, my oxen and my fatlings are killed." Nay, he saith to his ministers, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in." Though he foreknows who will come in, and has before all worlds ordained who shall taste of that supper, yet the invitation, in its widest possible range, is a true and honest one; and if you accept it you shall find it so.

Furthermore, if we understand *the gospel* at all, the gospel lies in a nutshell. It is this: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Or, to use Christ's words, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." This promise is the gospel. Now, the gospel is true, whatever else may be false. Whatever doctrine may or may not be of God, the gospel certainly is. The doctrine of sovereign grace is not contrary to the gospel, but perfectly consonant therewith. God has a people whom no man shall number, whom he hath ordained unto eternal life. This is by no means in conflict with the great declaration, "He that believeth on him is not condemned." If any man who ever lived, or ever shall live, believes in Jesus Christ, he hath eternal life. Election or no election, if you are resting upon the rock of ages you are saved. If you, as a guilty sinner, take the righteousness of Christ, — if, all black and foul and filthy, you come to wash in the fountain filled with blood, — sovereignty or no sovereignty, rest assured of this, that you are redeemed from the wrath to come. Oh, my dear friends! when you say, "I will not believe in Christ because of election," I can only say, as Job did to his wife, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women

speaketh." How dare you, because God reveals to you two things, which two things you cannot make square with one another — how dare you charge either the one or the other with being false? If I believe God, I am not only to believe what I can understand, but what I cannot understand; and if there were a revelation which I could comprehend and sum up as I may count five upon my fingers, I should be sure it did not come from God. But if it has some depths vastly too deep for me, — some knots which I cannot untie, some mysteries which I cannot solve, — I receive it with the greater confidence, because it now gives me swimming-room for my faith, and my soul bathes herself in the great sea of God's wisdom, praying, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

Let it be said, over and over again, that there shall be no doubt about this matter; that if there be any comfort derivable from the gospel; if there be any sweet consolation flowing from the free invitations and the universal commands of divine truth, all those may be received and enjoyed by you, while you hold this doctrine of divine sovereignty, as much as if you did not hold it, and received some wider scheme. Methinks I hear one voice say, "Sir, the only comfort I can ever have lies in *the infinite value of the precious blood of Christ;* O, sir! it seems to me such a sweet thing that there is no sinner so black that Christ cannot wash away his sins, and no sinner so old that the meritorious virtue of that atonement cannot meet his case — not one in any rank or in any condition whom that blood cannot cleanse from all sin. Now, sir, if that be true, how can the doctrine of election be true?" My dear friend, you know in your own heart that the two things are not opposed to each other at all For what does the doctrine of election say? It says that God has chosen and has saved some of the greatest sinners who ever lived, has cleansed some of the foulest sins ever committed and that he is doing and will do the same to the world's end So that the two things exactly tally. And I will venture to say that if in the fulness of a man's heart he shall say, "There is no sin, except the one excepted sin, which cannot be forgiven;" if

be boldly announce that "All manner of sin shall be forgiven unto men;" and if he shall plead with power and earnestness that souls would now come to Christ and lay hold upon eternal life; he may go back to his Bible, and he may read every text teaching the sovereignty of God, and every passage upholding divine election; and he may feel that all these texts look him in the face, and say, "Well done; our spirit and your spirit are precisely the same: we have no conflict together; we are two great truths which came from the same God; we are alike the revelation of the Holy Ghost." But we leave that point. If there be any comfort, sinner, which you can truthfully and rightly get from any passage of Scripture, from any promise of God, from any invitation, from any open door of mercy, you may have it; for the doctrine of election does not rob you of one atom of the consolation which the truth of God can afford you.

II. But now we will take another point for a moment. Our second head is, that THIS DOCTRINE HAS A MOST SALUTARY EFFECT UPON SINNERS. These may be divided into two classes: those who are *awakened*, and those who are *hardened* and *incorrigible*.

To the *awakened sinner*, next to the doctrine of the cross, the doctrine of distinguishing grace is perhaps the most fraught with blessings and comfort. In the first place, the doctrine of election, applied by the Holy Ghost, *strikes dead forever all the efforts of the flesh*. It is the end of Arminian preaching to make men active, — to excite them to do what they can; but the very end and object of gospel preaching is to make men feel that they have no power of their own, and to lay them as dead at the foot of God's throne. We seek, under God, to make them feel that all their strength must lie in the Strong One who is mighty to save. If I can convince a man that, let him do what he may, he cannot save himself; if I can show him that his own prayers and tears can never save him apart from the Spirit of God; if I can convince him that he must be born again from above; if I lead him to see that all which is born of the flesh is flesh, and

only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, — brethren! three parts of the great battle are already won. "I kill and I make alive," saith God: "when a man is killed the work is half done." "I wound and I heal; when a man is wounded his salvation is commenced." What! am I to set a sinner industriously to labor after eternal life by his own works? Then, indeed, am I an ambassador of hell. Am I to teach him that there is a goodness in him which he is to evolve, to polish and educate and perfect, and so to save himself? Then I am a teacher of the beggarly elements of the law, and not the gospel of Christ. Are we to set forth man's prayers, repentings, and humblings, as the way of salvation? If so, let us renounce the righteousness of Christ at once, for the two will never stand together. I am a mischief-maker if I excite the activities of the flesh, instead of pointing to the arms of the Redeemer! But if the potent hammer of electing sovereignty dashes out the brains of all a man's works, merits, doings, and willings, while it pronounces over the dead carcass this sentence: "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy;" then, the best thing is done for a sinner that can be done as a stepping-stone to the act of faith. When a man is weaned from self, and totally delivered from looking to the flesh for help, there is hope for him: and this the doctrine of divine sovereignty does, through the Holy Spirit's power.

Again: this doctrine *gives the greatest hope to the really awakened sinner.* You know how the case stands. We are all prisoners, condemned to die. God, as sovereign, has a right to pardon whom he pleases. Now, imagine a number of us shut up in a condemned cell, all guilty. One of the murderers says within himself: "I know that I have no reason to expect to be delivered. I am not rich: if I had some rich relations, like George Townley, I might be found insane, and delivered. But I am very poor; I am not educated. If I had the education of some men I might expect some consideration. I am not a man of rank and position; I am a man without merit or influence, therefore I cannot expect that I should be selected as one to be

saved." No; I believe that if the present authorities of our land were the persons to be taken into consideration, a man who was poor might have a very poor chance of expecting any gratuitous deliverance. But when God is the great sovereign the case is different. For then we argue thus: "Here am I; my salvation depends entirely upon the will of God: is there a chance for me?" We take down a list of those whom he has saved, and we find that he saves the poor, the illiterate, the wicked, the godless, and the worst of the worst, the base things, and things that are despised. Well, what do we say? "Then why may he not choose me? Why not save me? If I am to look for some reason in myself why I should be saved, I shall never find any, and consequently never shall have a hope. But if I am to be saved for no reason at all but that God wills to save me, ah! then there is hope for me. I will to the gracious King approach; I will do as he bids me; I will trust in his dear Son, and I shall be saved." So that this doctrine opens the door of hope to the worst of the worst, and the only persons it discourages are the Pharisees, who say, "Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men are," — those proud, haughty spirits who say, "No; if I am not to be saved for something good in myself, then I will be damned!" as damned they will be, with a vengeance, too.

Moreover, do not you see, dear friends, how *the doctrine of election comforts the sinner in the matter of power?* His complaint is, "I find I have no power to believe; I have no spiritual power of any kind." Election stoops down and whispers in his ear, "But if God wills to save you, he gives the power, gives the life, and gives the grace; and therefore, since he has given that power and might to others as weak as you, why not to you? Have courage; look to the cross of Christ, and live." And oh! what *emotions of gratitude*, what throbbings of *love* does this doctrine cause in human hearts! "Why," saith the man, "I am saved simply because God would save me; not because I deserved it, but because his loving heart would save me; then I will love him, I will live to him, I will spend and be spent for him." Such a man cannot be proud — I mean not consistently with the doc-

trine. He lies *humbly* at God's feet. Other men may boast of what they are, and how they have won eternal life by their own goodness; but I cannot. If God had left me, I had been in hell with others; and if I go to heaven, I must cast my crown at the feet of the grace which brought me there. Such a man will become *kind* to others. He will hold his opinions, but he will not hold them savagely, nor teach them bitterly; because he will say, "If I have light, and others have not, my light was given me from God; therefore I have no cause to plume myself upon it. I will try to spread that light, but not by anger and abuse. For why should I blame those who cannot see?—for could I have seen if God had not opened my blind eyes?" Every virtue this doctrine fosters, and every vice it kills, when the Holy Spirit so uses it. Pride it treads under foot; and humble, trustful confidence in the mercy of God in Christ, it cherishes as a darling child.

My time is gone; but I wanted to have said a word as to the effect of this gospel upon *incorrigible sinners*. I will just say this: I know what the effect of it ought to be. What do you say who have made up your minds not to repent···you who care not for God? Why, you believe that any day *you* like you can turn to God, since God is merciful, and will save you; and therefore you walk about the world as comfortably as possible, thinking it all depends upon you, and that you will get into heaven just at the eleventh hour. Ah, man! that is not your case. See where you are. Do you see that moth fluttering in my hand? Imagine it to be there. With this finger of mine I can crush it—in a moment. Whether it shall live or not depends absolutely upon whether I choose to crush it or let it go. That is precisely your position at the present moment. God can damn you now. Nay, let us say to you, "Yours is a worse position than that." There are some seven persons now doomed for murder and piracy on the high seas. You can clearly say that their lives depend upon Her Majesty's pleasure. If Her Majesty chooses to pardon them, she can. If not, when the fatal morning comes, the bolt will be drawn, and they will be launched

into eternity. That is your case, sinner. *You are condemned already.* This world is but one huge condemned cell, in which you are kept until the execution morning comes. If you are ever to be pardoned, *God must do it.* You cannot escape from him by flight; you cannot bribe him by actions of your own. You are absolutely in the hand of God, and if he leaves you where you are and as you are, your eternal ruin is as certain as your existence. Now, does not this make some sort of trembling come upon you? Perhaps not; it makes you angry. Well, if it does, that will not frighten me, because there are some of you who will never be good for anything until you are angry. I believe it is no ill sign when some persons are angry with the truth. It shows that the truth has pierced them. If an arrow penetrates my flesh, I do not like the arrow, and if you kick and struggle against this truth, it will not alarm me; I shall have some hope that a wound is made. If this truth should provoke you to think, it will have done for some of you one of the greatest things in the world. It is not your perverse thinking which frightens me; it is the utterly thoughtless way in which you go on. If you had sense enough to consider these things, and fight against them, I should then have some faint hope of you. But, alas! many of you have not sense enough; you say, "Yes, yes, it is all true." You accept it, but then it has no effect upon you. The gospel rolls over you, like oil adown a slab of marble, and produces no effect.

If you are at all right in heart, you will begin to see what your state is, and the next thing that will startle your mind will be the reflection: "Is it so? Am I absolutely in God's hands? Can he save me or damn me as he will? Then, I will cry to him, "O God! save me from the wrath to come — from eternal torment — from banishment from thy presence! Save me, O God! What wouldst thou have me to do? Oh! what wouldst thou have me to do, that I may find thy favor and live?" Then comes the answer to you: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved;" for "whosoever believeth in him shall never perish, but shall have eternal life."

Oh that God might bless this divine doctrine to you! I have never preached this doctrine without conversions, and I believe I never shall. At this moment God will cause his truth to attract your hearts to Jesus, or to affright you to him. May you be drawn as the bird is drawn by the lure, or may you be driven as a dove is hunted by the hawk into the clefts of the rock. Only may you be sweetly compelled to come. May my Lord fulfil this desire of my heart. Oh that God may grant me your souls for my hire! and to him shall be the glory, world without end. Amen.

SERMON XIII.

THE CRIPPLE AT LYSTRA.

"THE SAME HEARD PAUL SPEAK: WHO STEADFASTLY BEHOLDING HIM, AND PERCEIVING THAT HE HAD FAITH TO BE HEALED, SAID WITH A LOUD VOICE, STAND UPRIGHT ON THY FEET. AND HE LEAPED AND WALKED." — Acts xiv. 9, 10.

I HAVE read in your hearing the story of the preaching of Paul and Barnabas in the town of Lystra. The name of Christ was there totally unknown. They were a sort of country people, partly pastoral and partly agricultural, who seem to have been deeply sunken in superstition. At the gates of their city there stood a great temple, dedicated to Jupiter, and they appear to have been his zealous votaries. Coming down from the mountain-side, Paul and Barnabas enter the town; and when a fitting time has come, they stand up in the market-place, or the street, and begin to talk concerning Jesus, the Son of God, who had come down from heaven, had suffered and died, and had again ascended up on high. The people gather round them. Among the rest, a cripple listens with very marked attention. They preach again. The crowds are still greater; and on one occasion, while Paul is in the middle of a sermon, using his eyes to watch the audience, as all preachers should do, and not looking up at the ceiling or at the gallery-front, as some preachers are wont to do, he marks this cripple, fixes his eyes upon him, and looks earnestly in his face. Either by the exercise of his judgment, or by the promptings of revelation, the apostle gathers that this man has faith — faith to be healed. In order to attract the at-

tention of the people, to glorify the name of Christ, to publish more widely his glorious fame, and to make the miracle well known, Paul stops the sermon, and with a loud voice cries, "Stand upright on thy feet." The cripple leaps and praises God. The population are all amazed, and knowing that there was a tradition that Jupiter and Mercury had once appeared in that very town, — a tradition preserved in the Metamorphoses of Ovid to the present day, — they at once conclude that surely Jupiter and Mercury must be come again. They fix upon Barnabas, who was probably the elder and the nobler looking man, for Jupiter; and as Jupiter was always attended by Mercurius, as a messenger, and Mercury was the god of eloquence, they conclude that Paul must be Mercury. They rush to the temple; they tell the priests that the gods have come down. The priests, only too ready to foster popular credulity, and pander to it, bring forth the sacred bullocks and the garlands, and are about to offer sacrifice before Paul and Barnabas. Such homage these men of God indignantly refuse: they rend their clothes; they beseech them to do no such thing, for they are nothing but men; yet hardly with earnest words can they stay the people. But the next day certain Jews came thither and produced a counter irritation in the simple minds of the people: no very difficult task where a rude fanaticism rouses the wild passions of the mob. Such an assembly must rage, whether it be with redundant applause or with derisive jeers. Accordingly, Paul finds himself exposed to peril. He is stoned through the streets; dragged forth as dead, and left by the very men who worshipped him but yesterday as a god — left to die as a villain outside the city gates. But Paul's preaching had not been in vain. There were some few disciples who remained faithful. His ministry was rewarded and owned of God.

There are two or three points in this narrative to which I shall call your attention to-night, making, however, the lame man the centre of the picture. We shall notice, first of all, *what preceded this lame man's faith;* secondly, *wherein lay his faith to be healed;* and thirdly, *what is the teaching of the miracle*

itself, and the blessing which the lame man obtained through faith.

I. WHAT WAS IT WHICH PRECEDED HIS FAITH?

That "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," is a great and universal rule; but the hearing of what? Doubtless the hearing of the gospel is intended. On turning to your Bibles you will find it is written — "And there they preached the gospel." What, Paul! dost thou not change thy voice? Thou hast preached the gospel in the cities of Iconium and Antioch, where there were enlightened and intelligent hearers; if the gospel suited them, surely it will not do for these wolfish boors! Why go and preach to these poor, ignorant, superstitious fanatics the very same truths which you spoke to your enlightened Jewish brethren? But he does do so, my friends. The very gospel which he preached at Damascus in the synagogue, he preaches here at Lystra in the market-place. He makes no difference between the education of his hearers in different places; he has the same gospel to preach to them both You recollect that Paul went to Ephesus; and Ephesus, as a city, was besotted with a belief in sorcery. The people had given themselves up to practice magical arts. What is the right way to begin to preach at Ephesus? — deliver a course of lectures upon the impossibility and absurdity of such superstition? No, sir; nothing of the kind. Preach Christ, preach the gospel; and as Jesus Christ is lifted up, they bring their magical books and make a bonfire of them in the open forum. But here is a polished governor — Sergius Paulus — sitting upon the judgment-seat. What shall be preached to him? Would it not be well to begin with a dissertation on politics, and to show that the Christian religion does not interfere with proper government, — that it does not stir up the people to anarchy? No, sir; nothing of the kind. There is nothing for Sergius Paulus, any more than there is for Elymas the sorcerer, but the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul goes to Athens. Now, the Athenians are the most learned and philosophical of the whole race

of men. What will Paul preach there? The gospel, the whole gospel, and nothing but the gospel. He may change his *tones*, but never his *matter*. It is the same remedy for the same disease, be the men what they may. He comes to Corinth, and here you have not only polished manners, but the very refinement of vice. It is a city, an emporium of trade, and a sort of central dépôt of sin. What then? Will he now, to please the trader, assume a different dialect? Not he! The Christ for Athens is the Christ for Corinth too. And now see him. He has come to Lycaonia, and is preaching at Lystra. Here is an ignorant set of people, who worship an image. Why does he not begin by preaching of the Deity? Why does he not talk to them of the Trinity in unity? Why does he not try and confute their notions about their gods? No, my dear sir; he will do nothing of the kind: that may be done incidentally, but the first and the last thing that Paul will do at Lystra is, there he will preach the gospel. O glorious gospel of the blessed God! Wherever we take thee thou art suited to the wants of men. Take thee to Persia, with all its gems and jewels, and thou dost suit the monarch on his throne; or take thee to the naked savage, with all his poverty and squalid filth, and thou dost suit him too. Thou mayst be preached, thrice glorious wisdom of God, to the wisest of men; but thou art not too great a mystery to be understood and believed even by the fools and the babes: the things which are not can receive thee as well as the things which are. Never, I pray you brethren, lose heart in the power of the gospel. Do not believe that there exists any man, much less any race of men, for whom the gospel is not fitted. Wherever you go, do not cut, and trim, and shape, and alter; but just bring out the whole truth as God has taught it to you, and rest assured that you will be unto God a sweet savor of Christ in every place, both in them who are saved and in them who perish.

What, then, was this gospel which the Apostle Paul did preach everywhere? Well, it was a gospel which had in it three things, — *certain facts*, *certain doctrines*, and *certain commands*.

It was a *gospel of facts*. Every time Paul stood up to preach,

he told the following unvarnished tale: God, looking upon the race of men, beheld them lost and ruined. Out of love to them, he sent his only-begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was born of the Virgin Mary, lived some thirty-two or thirty-three years a life of spotless innocence and perfect obedience to God. He was God: he was man. In due time he was delivered up by the traitor Judas. He was crucified, and actually put to death. Though he was the Lord of life and glory, who only hath immortality, yet he bowed his head and gave up the ghost. After three days he rose again, and showed himself to many of his disciples, so that they were well assured he was the same person who had been put into the grave; and when the forty days were finished, he ascended up to heaven in the sight of them all, where he sitteth at the right hand of God, and shall also come ere long a second time to judge both the quick and the dead. These were the facts which Paul would state. God was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld his glory, — the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." Briefly, these were the facts which Paul would preach; and if any one of these facts be preached doubtfully, or be left out of any ministry, then the gospel is not preached; for the foundations upon which the gospel rests have been removed, and then what can the righteous do?

Following upon these facts, Paul preached *certain doctrines*, — the doctrines flowing out of the facts. To wit, he preached that Jesus Christ had offered a full atonement to divine wrath for the sin of his people, so that whosoever would believe on him, and trust him, should be saved. The doctrine of the atonement would form the most prominent feature in the gospel of the Apostle Paul. Christ also hath suffered for us, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. "God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly." Then would come the doctrine of pardon. Paul, with glowing tongue, would tell how God could be just, and yet the

justifier of him who believeth; how all manner of sin and iniquity shall be forgiven unto men, the simple condition being that the man believes in Christ; and this not so much the man's own work, as a gift of the Holy Ghost. Everywhere Paul would be unmistakable in this: "Ye chief of sinners, look to the wounds of Jesus, and your sins shall be forgiven you." Equally clear would he be upon the doctrine of justification. "Christ," he would say, "will wash you; nay, more, he will clothe you: the perfect holiness of his character shall be imputed unto you; and being justified, you shall have peace with God, and there shall be no condemnation, because you are in Christ Jesus." I think I see the flashing eye of the apostle. Methinks I listen to his earnest voice, while he pleads with men to lay hold upon eternal life, — to look to Jesus Christ, to forsake the deeds of the law, to put their trust in nothing which cometh from man, but to look to Jesus, and to Jesus only. These great truths, — atonement, pardon, and justification, with all the other truths connected with them, of which we cannot now speak particularly, — were just the gospel which the Apostle Paul preached.

And out of these we said there sprung *certain demands*. The commands were these: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Nor do I suppose that the apostle for a moment stammered to preach that other command: "Arise, and be baptized." He would not preach half the gospel, but the whole of it. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned;" and often, after his hearers had cried, "What must we do to be saved?" and they had believed in Christ, they would say to him: "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?"

The apostle, then, preached a gospel which was made up of certain authenticated facts, out of which there flowed certain most gracious evangelical doctrines, which were enforced and driven home with divine authority by Christ's own commands. "Well," says one, "do you think the world will be turned upside down by this?" Sirs, it has been, and it will be again. In vain do those who seek after human learning, and who aim at dreamy

sentiment or spurious science in preference to the standard teaching which is from above, attempt to find a nobler instrument. This is the great battering-ram which shall yet shake the bastions of error. This is the sword, the true Escalabar, which, if any man knoweth how to wield it, shall cut through joints and marrow, and make him more than a conqueror. He who getteth a hold of the gospel of Christ, and knoweth how to use it, hath that before which the devils tremble, and in the presence of which angels adore, — which cherubs long to look into, and which God himself smiles upon as his noblest work. The truth we proclaim is not that which is discovered by us, but that which has been delivered to us. Do ye ask, then, where this man's faith came from? It came from Paul's preaching of the gospel.

II. Now, wherein lay this man's faith?

Paul looked at the man, we are told, and perceived "*that he had faith to be healed.*" What meaneth this "faith to be healed?" In this man's case I think it was something like this: Poor fellow! As he listened to Paul's preaching, he thought, perhaps, "Well, that looks like true; that seems to be the truth; it is the truth; I am sure it is true; and if it is true that Jesus Christ is so great a Saviour, perhaps I may be healed. These lame legs of mine, which never would carry me anywhere, may yet come straight. I — I — I think they may; I hope they may; I believe they may. I know it can be done if Christ wills it. I believe that; and from what Paul says of Christ's character, I think he must be willing to do it. I will ask the apostle. The first convenient season that I have I will lift up my cry, for I believe it can be done; and I think there is a perfect willingness, both in the mind of the apostle and of the Master, that it should be done. I believe it will be done, and that I shall yet stand upright." Then Paul said to him, "Stand upright on thy feet," and he did so in a moment, for "he had faith to be healed."

Do you think I am overstraining the probabilities of the case? You will perhaps say, "It does not appear that Paul had any communication with the poor cripple before the miracle was per-

formed." Now, I venture to draw quite an opposite inference I know from my own experience that it is no uncommon thing for some one individual to arrest the preacher's attention. The group of countenances which lay before him in a large assembly, like the present, might to the first glance of a stranger look confused and inexplicable, as a Chinese grammar does to those who know not the language. But you need not doubt that a practised eye can learn to read the one as well as the other. The languor and indifference of some; the curious, inquiring look of others; the cold, critical attention of a considerable number; and the countenances of those who are rather absorbed in a train of thought just awakened in their own minds, — these have all a peculiar impressiveness, and form a picture which often reacts upon us, and kindles a vehement desire in our breasts to reach the souls of those who, for a brief hour, hang upon our lips. But there will sometimes be one who has faith dazzling in his very eyes, as they are fixed with an intentness of which it were vain for me to attempt a description — seeming to drink in every word and every syllable of a word, till the preacher becomes as absorbed in that man as the man had been in the preacher. And while he pursues the discourse, gaining liberty at every step, till he forgets the formality of the pulpit in the freedom of conversation with the people, he perceives that at last this man has heard the very truth which meets his case. There is no concealing it. His features have suddenly relaxed. He listens still, but it is no longer with painful anxiety; a calm satisfaction is palpable on his face now. That soul of communion which is in the eye has unravelled the secret. Preacher and hearer, unknown to all the rest of the audience, have secretly saluted each other, and met on the common ground of a vital faith. The anxious one feels that it can be done. And I can readily conclude that the apostle perceived that feeling with greater certainty than he would have done had the man whispered it in his ears. So have I sometimes known that the exhortation to believe has become from these lips a positive command to the struggling conscience of some one who has been brought to a

point where the remedy is instantly applied, and the cure instantly effected.

Most unquestionably there is such a thing as faith to be saved. I do not know how many here may possess it; but, thank God! there are hundreds of you here who have faith that *you are* saved. That is better; that is the ripest faith — the faith which knows you are saved, and rejoices in hope of the glory of God. Alas! there are others who have no faith at all. But it is with those who have faith, and that only faith *to be* saved, not faith that *you are* saved, I am more particularly concerned at this moment.

Shall I describe this "faith to be saved?" for I believe that there may be some here who may just now stand upright on their feet; some who may at this time leap for joy of heart because they are saved, and did not know it. You have "faith," but you have not fully exercised it. Now, you believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son? "Yes." That he has made a full atonement for his people? "Yes." You believe that they are his people who trust him? "Yes.' You believe he is worthy to be trusted? "Yes." You have nothing else to trust to? "No, sir." You depend on nothing which you have ever felt, or thought, or done? "No, sir; I depend on nothing but Christ." And you do, after a sort of fashion, trust Christ. You hope that one of these days he will save you; and you think, and sometimes you almost know, he will. You are ready to trust him. You do believe he is able, you do not think he is unwilling; you have got faith in his ability, and you have almost got faith in his willingness. Sometimes you half think to yourself, "I am a child of God." But, then, there is some ugly "but" comes in. Those lame legs again, — those lame legs again. You are still afraid. You have "faith to be saved," but you have not the full assurance of faith which can utter forth this joyous psalm: "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation."

Well, now, I do not know whether I have picked you out — whether I have given a right description of you or not. I recollect the time when I was in that state. I can honestly say I

did not doubt Christ. I three parts believed that he would save me. I knew he was worthy of my trust; and I did trust him as far as this, — that I resolved, if I did perish, I would perish crying to him; and that, if I was cast away, it should be clinging to the cross. I believe I had "faith to be saved," and was for months in bondage when there was no necessity that I should have been in bondage at all; for when there is "faith to be saved," then the man only needs that gracious command, "Stand upright on thy feet," and forthwith he leaps out of his infirmity, and walks freely in the integrity of his heart.

III. I shall not enlarge further upon this, because I want to go to THE SPIRITUAL TEACHING OF THE MIRACLE, AND OF THE BLESSING CONFERRED.

Are there not many who, though they have "faith to be saved," are still entirely lame, or painfully limping? The reasons may be different in different cases. Some have been so stunned by the grief which they have suffered on account of sin, and the frightful convictions through which they have passed, that while they do believe that Christ is able and willing to save, they cannot get a hold of the fact that they are saved, — such is the faintness of spirit and the languishing of soul brought on by long despair. "Stand upright on thy feet," thou trembling sinner. If thou believest in Jesus, whatever thy fears may be, there is no cause for them. As for thy sins, they were laid on him, every one of them, and though thou hast been sore broken in the land of dragons, thus saith the Lord unto thee: "I have put away thy sin; thou shalt not die: I have blotted out like a cloud thy transgressions, and like a thick cloud thy sins." Rejoice, then, and be glad. If you do trust Christ, you *are* saved; though as yet it only looketh like faith which heralds the tidings of a salvation which has not yet arrived. Still, it is the grace of God which bringeth salvation which has enabled thee to believe; and he who believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. Oh, receive the welcome message; spring up at the sound of the words; stand upright on thy feet, and rejoice.

Some are still lame, though they have faith, *through ignorance.* They do not know what being saved is. They entertain wrong expectations. They are trusting in Christ, but they do not feel any surprising emotions; they have not had any remarkable dreams, or visions, or striking ebullitions of excited joy; and therefore, though they have "faith to be saved," they have not the faith of a present salvation. They are waiting for something, they hardly know what, to embellish their faith, or to fortify it with signs and wonders. Now, poor soul, wherefore do you wait? These things are not necessary to salvation. In fact, the fewer you have of them, methinks, the better, especially of things which are visionary. I rather tremble for those who talk much about sensible evidences; they are too often the frivolities of unstable hearts. Beloved, though you may have never had any ecstatic joys, or suffered any deep depression of your spirits, if you are resting on Christ, it does not matter one whit what your feelings have been or have not been. Do you expect to have an electric shock, or to go through some mysterious operation? The operation is mysterious, too mysterious for you to discern it; but all that you have to do with is this — "Do I believe in Jesus? Am I simply depending upon him for everything?" If you do, you are saved; and I pray you to believe this. Stand upright on your feet, and leap for joy; for, whether you believe it or not, if you are now depending upon Christ, your sins are forgiven you; you are a child of God; you are an heir of heaven.

How many, too, are kept lame because of *a fear of self-deception.* "I do trust Christ, but I am afraid lest I should deceive myself. Suppose I were to get confidence, and it should be presumption. Suppose I should think myself saved, and I am not!" Now, sir, if thou wert dealing with thyself there would be reason to be afraid of presumption; but thy faith hath to deal with God, who cannot deceive thee, and with Christ who will never tempt thee to be a deceiver. Doth not the Lord Jesus Christ himself tell thee that if thou believest in him thou art saved? Thou believest that, dost thou not? Then, soul, if thou believest on

him, it is not presumption to say, "I am saved." Away with all that affectation of modesty, which some good people think to be so pretty — saying, "I hope," "I trust;" but "I feel such doubts, such fears, and such gloomy misgivings." My dear sir, that is not humility; that is a vain, unseemly questioning of God. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ tells you — and he gives his own unequivocal word for it — that if you rest upon Christ you rest upon a rock; that if you believe in him you are not condemned. Is it an evidence of the lowliness of your heart that you suspect the veracity of God, or the faithfulness of his promise? Surely this were no fruit of the meekness of wisdom. No, beloved; it may seem too good to be true, but it is not too good for my God to give, though it is too good for you to receive. You have his word for it, that, if you trust his Son to save you, and simply trust him, and him alone, even if the pillars of the heavens should shake, yet you would be saved. If the foundations of the earth should reel, and the whole earth should like a vision pass away, yet this eternal promise and oath of God must stand fast.

Others, again, cannot stand upright on their feet, because they are afraid that *if they did begin they would go back again, and so bring dishonor to Christ.* This would be a very proper fear, if you had anything to do with keeping yourselves. If you had to carry yourselves to heaven, it would be reasonable enough for you to despair of doing it. Of your own impotence it is impossible you can be too deeply convinced. You cannot do anything whatever, but Christ gives you his promise to preserve you even to the end. If you believe on him you shall be saved. He does not say you shall be saved for a year, or for twenty years, and then, perhaps, be lost at last. No; but "he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." If one man who believes in Christ is cast away, that promise of Christ is not true. Brethren, it is true, and it must be true, — and let its glorious truth be sweetly familiar with you now, — if you give your soul to Christ, putting simple faith in his person as the Son of God, and in his work as the Mediator between God and man, you shall as surely see his

face within the pearly gates of heaven as your eyes see me to-night. There may be a question about your seeing me, but there can be no question about Christ fulfilling his promise and keeping his word. Now, sit down in the dust no longer, thou doubting, mourning, trembling sinner. With a loud voice I say unto thee, as Paul did, "*Stand upright on thy feet.*" Wherefore dost thou mourn? There is nothing to mourn about. Thy sin is forgiven; thine eternal salvation is secure; a crown in heaven is provided for thee, and a harp of gold awaits thee. If thou believest in Jesus, none can lay anything to thy charge. Not even the principalities of darkness shall be able to prevail against thee. Eternal love secures thee against the malice of hell. Stand upright, then, on thy feet; for if thou believest, thou art saved, completely saved, — saved in time, and for eternal days, — saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.

Then, possibly, there is one here who cannot stand upright *because of his many sins.* Ah! while I have been talking about Christ, it may be something has been saying in your heart, "Ah! ah! what is it? Christ taking men's sins, suffering in their stead? That suits me. Is God doing this? Ah! then he must be able to save, and I am told that whosoever trusteth in him shall never perish. Is it so? Why, here I am; I, who have not been in a place of worship for months, for years, — I have strayed in here to-night; and if what this man says be true, well, then I will even venture my soul upon it. I have got nothing, I know; but he says there is nothing wanted. I am not prepared to trust Christ, but he says there is no preparation required; and if I trust Jesus Christ just as I am, Christ will save me. Why, I will do it; by the grace of God I will do it. Can he save me?" Then comes in the bitter reflection: "Look what a sinner I have been! Why, I should be ashamed to say how foully I have sinned. He must shut me out. I have been too great a villain, too gross an offender. I have cursed and sworn at such a rate. He cannot mean that if I trust Christ I shall be saved. I believe he can save me; I see the fitness of the plan, and the excellency of it. I believe it; but see what a sinner I am!" Sinner, stand

upright on thy feet; for "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Return, thou wanderer; return to thy Father's house! He comes to meet thee. On thy neck he will fall, and thou shalt be his child forever. Only believe thou in his Son Jesus Christ, and though this be the first time thou hast ever heard his Word, I would settle mine eyes upon thee earnestly, and say, "Stand upright on thy feet."

Oh! how often I do wish that somebody had come to me when I was under depression of mind, and had told me about the simple gospel of Jesus Christ! I think I should have stood upright on my feet long before I did; but, alas! I kept hearing about what people felt before they believed in Christ, — very proper preaching, — and I was afraid I did not feel it, though now I know I did. I heard a great deal about what Christians ought to be, and a great deal more about God's elect — what they are in his esteem; but I did not know whether I was one of God's elect; and I knew I was not what I ought to be. Oh for the trumpet of the archangel, to sound the words, "*Believe and live*," as loud as the voice which shall wake the dead in their graves! And oh for the quickening Spirit to go with voice, as it shall go with the ringing of the archangel's trump, when the graves shall open, and the dead shall arise! Go, you who know it, and tell it everywhere; for there are multitudes, I doubt not, who are really seeking Christ, and who have his Spirit in them; but it is like as the prophet hath it: "The children have come to the birth and there is no strength to bring forth." They have come to the very edge of light, and they only want one helping hand to bring them into noonday. They are slipping about in the Slough of Despond, and they are almost out of it; but they want just a helping hand to pull them out. This hand of help is stretched out by thus telling them, telling them plainly, it is in Jesus their help is found, and that trusting him, relying upon him, they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand.

I would to God that some of you, who have been long hearing me, might be found in this class. I have been bowed down

in spirit at some sad things which have been brought to my hearing of late. I know that there are some here, and there always have been some few attending my ministry, who have a personal affection for me, and who listen to the Word with very great attention, and who, moreover, are very greatly moved by it, but who have some besetting sin which they either cannot or will not give up. They do renounce it for a time; but either bad associates, or else the strength of their passions, take them away again. Oh, sirs! I would ye would take warning. There was one of whom we had some sort of hope, who listened to our ministry. There came a turning-point with him. It was this: either that he must give up sin, or else give up coming to the Tabernacle. And what, oh! what became of him? I could indicate the place where he sat. *He died of delirium tremens!* And I do not wonder. When you have heard the gospel preached Sabbath after Sabbath, — when your response to the solemn appeals you have earnestly listened to has only been that you reject Christ and refuse eternal life, — is it any marvel that in making the choice of your own damnation reason should resign its seat as director of your actions, and cease to curb your headstrong will, leaving the maddened passions to dash on with reckless fury, and precipitate your destruction? Am I clear of their blood? I have asked myself the question. I may not be in some things, but I know I am as far as my ministry is concerned. I have not shunned to declare unto any of you the whole counsel of God. When I have known any vice, or any folly — which of you have I been afraid of, or before whom of you all have I trembled? God is my witness; him have I served in the spirit. And if these turn aside unto their crooked ways, they have not done it without well knowing the consequences; nay, they have not done it without being warned and entreated, and persuaded to look unto Jesus Christ. And I do conjure some of you — you know to whom I refer — I do conjure those of you who have a conscience which is not seared, but who, nevertheless, persevere in your sins — I conjure you by the love of God, do me this one favor at the last: if you choose your own ruin, bear

witness for me that I have not hesitated to warn you of it. I had infinitely rather, however, that you would do yourselves this great favor, to love your own souls. If you have anything to throw into the fire, throw it in; but let it not be your soul. If you have anything to lose, go and lose it; but do not lose your soul. Sirs, if you must play the fool, indulge your sport at a cheaper rate than this. If sin be worth having, then I pray you pay a cheaper price than your own souls for it; for it does seem to me so pitiful, so sorrowful a thing that you who have been so short a time among us, and are passing away before my very eyes, should still prefer the fleeting joy of the moment to the eternal joy, and risk everlasting torment for temporary mirth. By the tears of Jesus, when he wept over Jerusalem; by the blood of Jesus, which he shed for guilty men; by the heart of the eternal Father, who willeth not the death of a sinner, but had rather that he should turn unto him and live, — I pray you be wise, and consider your ways. Choose ye this day whom ye will serve, and may the Lord guide your choice. May you fall into the arms of Divine Mercy, and say, "If thou wilt help me, Jesus, here I am; I give myself to thee." May my Master teach me how to address you, if I do not know how to gasp the words of simplicity, tenderness, — of terrible apprehension, but of persuasive power. If there were any words in any language that would melt you, this tongue is at your service to utter them. If there is any form of speech, though it should make me to be called vulgar, and subject me to the shame and hissing which once I endured, — if the furnace could be heated seven times hotter than that, I would but laugh at it if I might but win your souls. Tell me, sirs, how shall I put the case? Would you have argument? I wish that I could reason with you. Would you have tears? There, let them flow! Ye dry eyes, why do ye not weep more for these perishing souls? Would you have God's Word without my word? Sirs, I would read it and let my tongue be dumb, if that would teach you. Would my death save you? That God who seeth in secret knoweth that to-night it were a joy to me to enter into my rest,

and so it were little for me to talk of being willing to give a life for you; and it were, indeed, but a trifle to me. Oh! why will ye perish? Why should I plead with you, and you not care for yourselves? What is it that besets you? Poor moths! Are ye dazzled with the flames? Are ye not content to have singed your wings? Must they also consume body and soul? How can ye make your bed in hell? How can ye abide with eternal burnings? In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, I command you — for I can do no less — I command you to turn unto him, and live. Believe on him and you shall be saved. But, remember, at your hazard you reject the message to-night. It may be the last message that shall ever come to your soul with power; if ye cast this away —

> "What chains of vengeance must they feel,
> Who slight the bonds of love?"

I would have you saved just now. I cannot talk about to-morrow. I would have you decide it at once. Oh! you have come as far as this twenty times, and have you gone back again? You have been aroused; you have made vows, and you have broken them; resolutions, and you have belied them. Oh, sirs, for God's sake do not lie to the Almighty again! Now, be true this time. May the Spirit of God make you speak the truth, even though you should be compelled to say, through your wickedness: "I will not submit myself unto the Son of God." Do speak the truth. Procrastinate not. As Elijah said, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" so say I. If God be God, serve him; but if Baal be God, serve him. But do not keep on coming here and then going to the pot-house. Do not come and take your seat here and then go to the brothel. Sirs, do not this foul scandal for God's sake, and for your own sake. If you will serve the devil, serve him, and be a true servant to him. If you mean to go to hell, go there; but if you seek eternal life and joys to come, give up these things. Renounce them. Why drink poison and drink medicine too? Have done with one or the other,

and be honest. Be honest to your own souls. May the Lord grant that to-night some may have given to them not only "faith to *be* saved," but the faith which saves, for his name's sake. Amen.

SERMON XIV.

A BUNDLE OF MYRRH.

"A BUNDLE OF MYRRH IS MY WELL-BELOVED UNTO ME; HE SHALL LIE ALL NIGHT BETWIXT MY BREASTS."— Canticles i. 13.

CERTAIN divines have doubted the inspiration of Solomon's Song; others have conceived it to be nothing more than a specimen of ancient love-songs; and some have been afraid to preach from it because of its highly poetical character. The true reason for all this avoidance of one of the most heavenly portions of God's Word lies in the fact that the spirit of this Song is not easily attained. Its music belongs to the higher spiritual life, and has no charm for unspiritual ears. The Song occupies a sacred enclosure, into which none may enter unprepared. "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground," is the warning voice from its secret tabernacles. The historical books I may compare to the outer courts of the temple; the Gospels, the Epistles, and the Psalms, bring us into the holy place, or the court of the priests; but the Song of Solomon is *the most holy place* — the holy of holies, before which the veil still hangs to many an untaught believer. It is not all the saints who can enter here, for they have not yet attained unto the holy confidence of faith, and that exceeding familiarity of love which will permit them to commune in conjugal love with the great Bridegroom. We are told that the Jews did not permit the young student to read the Canticles, — that years of full maturity were thought necessary before the man could rightly profit by this mysterious Song of loves. Possibly they

were wise; at any rate, the prohibition foreshadowed a great truth. The Song is, in truth, a book for full-grown Christians. Babes in grace may find their carnal and sensuous affections stirred up by it towards Jesus, whom they know rather "after the flesh" than in the spirit; but it needs a man of fuller growth, who has leaned his head upon the bosom of his Master, and been baptized with his baptism, to ascend the lofty mountains of love on which the spouse standeth with her beloved. The Song, from the first verse to the last, will be clear to those who have received an unction from the Holy One, and know all things (1 John ii. 20). You are aware, dear friends, that there are very few commentaries upon the Epistles of John. Where we find fifty commentaries upon any book of St. Paul, you will hardly find one upon John. Why is that? Is the book too difficult? The words are very simple; there is hardly a word of four syllables anywhere in John's Epistles. Ah! but they are so saturated through and through with the spirit of love, which also perfumes this Book of Solomon, that those who are not taught in the school of communion cry out, "We cannot read it, for it is sealed." The Song is a golden casket, of which love is the key rather than learning. Those who have not attained unto heights of affection, those who have not been educated by familiar intercourse with Jesus, cannot come near to this mine of treasure, "seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of heaven." Oh for the soaring eagle-wing of John, and the far-seeing dove's eyes of Solomon! But the most of us are blind, and cannot see afar off. May God be pleased to make us grow in grace, and give us so much of the Holy Spirit that, with feet like hind's feet, we may stand upon the high places of Scripture, and this morning have some near and dear intercourse with Christ Jesus.

Concerning our text, let us talk very simply; remarking, first, that *Christ is very precious to believers;* secondly, that *there is good reason why he should be;* thirdly, that *mingled with this sense of preciousness there is a joyous consciousness of possession of him;* and that therefore, fourthly, *there is an earnest desire*

for perpetual fellowship with him. If you look at the text again you will see all these matters in it.

I. First, then, CHRIST JESUS IS UNUTTERABLY PRECIOUS TO BELIEVERS. The words manifestly imply this: "A bundle of myrrh is *my well-beloved* unto me." She calls him her "well-beloved,' and so expresses her love most emphatically; it is not merely *beloved*, but *well*-beloved. Then she looks abroad about her to find a substance which shall be at once valuable in itself and useful in its properties, and lighting upon myrrh, she saith: "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me." Without looking into the figure just now, we keep to the statement that Christ is precious to the believer.

Observe, first, that *nothing gives the believer so much joy as fellowship with Christ.* Ask yourselves, you who have eaten at his table and have been made to drink of his cup, where can such sweetness be found as you have tasted in communion with Jesus? The Christian has joy, as other men have, in the common mercies of life. For him there are charms in music, excellence in painting, and beauty in sculpture; for him the hills have sermons of majesty, the rocks hymns of sublimity, and the valleys lessons of love. He can look upon all things with an eye as clear and joyous as another man's; he can be glad both in God's gifts and God's works. He is not dead to the happiness of the household: around his hearth he finds happy associations, without which life were drear indeed. His children fill his home with glee; his wife is his solace and delight; his friends are his comfort and refreshment. He accepts the comforts which soul and body can yield him, according as God seeth it wise to afford them unto him; but he will tell you that in all these separately, yea, and in all of them added together, he doth not find such substantial delight as he doth in the person of his Lord Jesus. Brethren, there is a wine which no vineyard on earth ever yielded; there is a bread which even the cornfields of Egypt could never bring forth. You and I have said, when we have beheld others finding their god in earthly comforts, "You may

boast in gold and silver and raiment, but I will rejoice in the God of my salvation." In our esteem, the joys of earth are little better than husks for swine, compared with Jesus the heavenly manna. I would rather have one mouthful of Christ's love, and a sip of his fellowship, than a whole world-full of carnal delights. What is the chaff to the wheat? What is the sparkling paste to the true diamond? What is a dream to the glorious reality? What is time's mirth in its best trim compared to our Lord Jesus in his most despised estate? If you know anything of the inner life, you will all of you confess that our highest, purest, and most enduring joys must be the fruit of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. No spring yields such sweet water as that well of God which was digged with the soldier's spear. As for the house of feasting, the joy of harvest, the mirth of marriage, the sports of youth, the recreations of maturer age — they are all as the small dust of the balance compared with the joy of Immanuel our best beloved. As the Preacher said, so say we: "I said of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What doeth it?" "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." All earthly bliss is of the earth, earthy; but the comforts of Christ's presence are like himself, heavenly. We can review our communion with Jesus, and find no regrets of emptiness therein; there are no dregs in this wine, no dead flies in this ointment. The joy of the Lord is solid and enduring. Vanity hath not looked upon it, but discretion and prudence testify that it abideth the test of years, and is in time and in eternity worthy to be called "*the only true delight.*"

"What is the world, with all its store?
'Tis but a bitter sweet;
When I attempt to pluck the rose,
A pricking thorn I meet.

"Here perfect bliss can ne'er be found;
The honey's mixed with gall;
'Midst changing scenes and dying friends,
Be thou my All in All."

We may plainly see that Christ is very precious to the believer,

because *to him there is nothing good without Christ.* Believer, have you not found in the midst of plenty a dire and sore famine if your Lord has been absent? The sun was shining, but Christ had hidden himself, and all the world was black to you: or it was a night of tempest, and there were many stars; but since the bright and morning star was gone, on that dreary main, where you were tossed with doubts and fears, no other star could shed so much as a ray of light. Oh, what a howling wilderness is this world without my Lord! If once he groweth angry, and doth, though it be for a moment, hide himself from me, withered are the flowers of my garden; my pleasant fruits decay; the birds suspend their songs, and black night lowers over all my hopes. Nothing can compensate for the company of the Saviour: all earth's candles cannot make daylight if the Sun of Righteousness be gone.

On the other hand, *when all earthly comforts have failed you, have you not found quite enough in your Lord?* Your very worst times have been your best times. You must almost cry to go back to your bed of sickness, for Jesus made it as a royal throne, whereon you reigned with him. Those dark nights — ah! they were not dark; your bright days, since then, have been darker far. Do you remember when you were poor? Oh, how near Christ was to you, and how rich he made you! You were despised and rejected of men, and no man gave you a good word. Ah! sweet was his fellowship then; and how delightful to hear him say, "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God"! As afflictions abound, even so do consolations abound by Christ Jesus. The devil, like Nebuchadnezzar, heated the furnace seven times hotter; but who would have it less furiously blazing? No wise believer; for, the more terrible the heat, the greater the glory in the fact that we were made to tread those glowing coals, and not a hair of our head was singed, nor so much as the smell of fire passed upon us, because the Son of God walked those glowing coals in our company. Yes, we can look with resignation upon penury, disease, and even death;

for if all comforts be taken from us, we should still be blest, so long as we enjoy the presence of the Lord our Saviour.

Nor should I be straining the truth if I say that *the Christian would sooner give up anything than forsake his Master.* I have known some who have been afraid to look that text in the face which saith, "He that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me," or that, "Except a man hate (or love less) his father and mother, and wife and children, he cannot be my disciple." Yet I have found that those have frequently proved to be the most sincere lovers of Jesus who have been most afraid that he had not the best place in their hearts. Perhaps the best way is not to sit down calmly to weigh our love, — for it is not a thing to be measured with cool judgment, — but put your love to some practical test. Now, if it came to this, that you must deny Christ or give up the dearest thing you have, would you deliberate? The Lord knoweth I speak what I feel in my own soul, — when it comes to that, I could not hesitate a second. If there were a stake and burning fagots, I might flinch from the fire; but so mighty is divine love, that it would doubtless drive me to the flames sooner than let me leave Jesus. But if it comes to this: "Wilt thou lose thine eyes or give up Christ?" I would cheerfully be blind. Or if it were asked, "Wilt thou have thy right arm withered from its socket or give up Christ?" Ay; let both arms go: let them both drop from the shoulder-blades. Or if it should be, "Wilt thou be from this day dumb, and never speak before the multitude?" Oh! better to be dumb than lose Him. Indeed, when I talk of this it seems to be an insult to my Master to put hands and eyes and tongue in comparison with him.

> "Nor to my eyes is light so dear,
> Nor friendship half so sweet."

If you compare life itself with Jesus, it is not to be named in the same day. If it should be said, "Will you live without Christ or die with Christ?" you could not deliberate, for to die with Christ is to live with Christ forever; but to live without Christ is to die the second death, the terrible death of the soul's

eternal perdition. No; there is no choice there. I think we could go further, dear friends, and say, not only could we give up everything, but I think, when love is fervent, and the flesh is kept under, *we could suffer anything with Christ.* I met, in one of Samuel Rutherford's letters, an extraordinary expression, where he speaks of the coals of divine wrath all falling upon the head of Christ, so that not one might fall upon his people. "And yet," saith he, "if one of those coals should drop from his head upon mine, and did utterly consume me, yet if I felt it was a part of the coals that fell on him, and I was bearing it for his sake, and in communion with him, I would choose it for my heaven." That is a strong thing to say, that to suffer with Christ would be his heaven, if he assuredly knew that it was for and with Christ that he was suffering. Oh! there is indeed a heavenliness about suffering for Jesus. *His* cross hath such a majesty and mystery of delight in it, that, the more heavy it becometh, the more lightly doth it sit upon the believer's shoulders.

One thing I know proveth, beloved, that you esteem Christ to be very precious; namely, that *you want others to know him too.* Do you not feel a pining in your souls till others' hearts be filled with the love of Christ? My eyes could weep themselves out of their sockets for some of you who are ignorant of my Master's love. Poor souls! ye are sitting outside the feast when the door is wide open, and the king himself is within. Ye choose to be out in the highways and under the hedges sooner than come to this wedding feast, where the oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready. Oh! did you know *him*, did you know *him*, you would never be able to live without him. If your eyes had ever seen him once, or if your heart had ever known the charm of his presence, you would think it to be a hell to be for a moment without Christ. O poor blind eyes which cannot see him, and deaf ears which cannot hear him, and hard, stony hearts which cannot melt before him, and hell-besotted souls which cannot appreciate the majesty of his love, God help you! God help you! and bring you yet to know and rejoice in

him. The more your love grows, beloved, the more insatiable will be your desire that others should love him, till it will come to this, that you will be, like Paul, "in labors more abundant," spending and being spent that you may bring the rest of Christ's elect body into union with their glorious head.

II. But, secondly, THE SOUL CLINGETH TO CHRIST, AND SHE HATH GOOD REASON FOR SO DOING, for her own words are, "*A bundle of myrrh* is my well-beloved unto me." We will take the myrrh first, and then consider the bundle next.

1. *Jesus Christ is like myrrh.* Myrrh may be well the type of Christ for its *preciousness.* It was an exceedingly expensive drug. We know that Jacob sent some of it down into Egypt, as being one of the choice products of the land. It is always spoken of in Scripture as being a rich, rare, and costly substance. But no myrrh could ever compare with him; for Jesus Christ is so precious, that if heaven and earth were put together they could not buy another Saviour. When God gave to the world his Son, he gave the best that heaven had. Take Christ out of heaven, and there is nothing for God to give. Christ was God's all; for is it not written, "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"? O precious gift of the whole of deity in the person of Christ! How inestimably precious is that body of his which he took of the substance of the virgin! Well might angels herald the coming of this immaculate Saviour, well might they watch over his holy life; for he is precious in his birth, and precious in all his actions. How precious is he, dear friends, as myrrh in the offering of his great atonement! What a costly sacrifice was that! At what a price were ye redeemed! Not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. How precious is he, too, in his resurrection! He justifies all his people at one stroke; rising from the dead, that glorious Sun scatters all the nights of all his people by one rising. How precious is he in his ascension, as he leads captivity captive, and scattereth gifts among men! And how precious to-day in those incessant pleadings of his through which the mercies of

God come down like the angels upon Jacob's ladder to our needy souls! Yes, he is to the believer, in every aspect, like myrrh for rarity and excellence

Myrrh, again, was *pleasant*. It was a pleasant thing to be in a chamber perfumed with myrrh. Through the nostrils myrrh conveys delight to the human mind; but Christ gives delight to his people, not through one channel, but through every avenue. It is true that all his garments smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia; but he hath not spiritual smell alone; the taste shall be gratified too; for we eat his flesh and drink his blood. Nay, our feeling is ravished when his left hand is under us and his right hand doth embrace us. As for his voice, it is most sweet, and our soul's ear is charmed with its melody. Let God give him to our sight, and what can our eyes want more? Yea, he is altogether lovely. Thus every gate of the soul hath commerce with Christ Jesus in the richest and rarest commodities. There is no way by which a human spirit can have communion with Jesus which doth not yield unto that spirit fresh and varied delights. O, beloved, we cannot compare him merely to myrrh. He is everything which is good to look upon, or to taste, or to handle, or to smell, all put together in one, — the quintessence of all delights. As all the rivers run into the sea, so all delights centre into Christ. The sea is not full, but Jesus is full to the very brim.

Moreover, myrrh is *perfuming*. It is used to give a sweet smell to other things. It was mingled with the sacrifice, so that it was not only the smoke of the fat of kidneys of rams, and the flesh of fat beasts, but there was a sweet fragrance of myrrh, which went up with the sacrifice to heaven. And surely, beloved, Jesus Christ is very perfuming to his people. Does not he perfume their prayers, so that the Lord smelleth a sweet savor? Doth he not perfume their songs, so that they become like vials full of odor sweet? Doth he not perfume our ministry? for is it not written, "He causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place? For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them

that are saved, and in them that perish" Our persons are perfumed with Christ. Whence get we our spikenard, but from him? Whither shall we go to gather camphor, which shall make our persons and presence acceptable before God, but to him? "For we are accepted in the beloved." "Ye are complete in him" — "perfect in Christ Jesus" — "for he hath made us kings and priests unto our God, and we shall reign for ever and ever."

Myrrh has *preserving* qualities. The Egyptians used it in embalming the dead; and we find Nicodemus and the holy women bringing myrrh and aloes in which to wrap the dead body of the Saviour. It was used to prevent corruption. What is there which can preserve the soul but Christ Jesus? What is the myrrh which keeps our works, which in themselves are dead and corrupt and rotten — what, I say, keeps them from becoming a foul stench in the nostrils of God, but that Christ is in them? What we have done out of love to Christ, what we have offered through his mediation, what has been perfumed by faith in his person, becomes acceptable. God looketh upon anything we say, or anything we do, and if he seeth Christ in it, he accepteth it; but if there be no Christ, he putteth it away as a foul thing. See to it then, beloved, that you never pray a prayer which is not sweetened with Christ. I would never preach a sermon — the Lord forgive me if I do! — which is not full to overflowing with my Master. I know one who said I was always on the old string, and he would come and hear me no more; but if I preached a sermon without Christ in it he would come. Ah! he will never come while this tongue moves; for a sermon without Christ in it, — a Christless sermon; a brook without water; a cloud without rain; a well which mocks the traveller; a tree twice dead, plucked up by the root; a sky without a sun; a night without a star; — it were a realm of death — a place of mourning for angels and laughter for devils. O Christian, we must have Christ! Do see to it that every day when you wake you give a fresh savor of Christ upon you by contemplating his person. Live all the day, trying as much as

lieth in you to season your hearts with him, and then at night lie down with him upon your tongue. It is said of Samuel Rutherford, that he often did fall asleep talking about Christ, and was often heard in his dreams saying sweet things about his Saviour. There is nothing which can preserve us, and keep us from sin, and make our works holy and pure, like this "bundle of myrrh."

Myrrh, again, was used as a *disinfectant.* When the fever is abroad, we know people who wear little bags of camphor about their necks. They may be very good; I do not know. But the Orientals believed that, in times of pest and plague, a little bag of myrrh worn between the breasts would be of essential service to whoever might carry it. And there doubtless is some power in myrrh to preserve from infectious disease. Well, brethren, certain I am it is so with Christ. You have to go into the world, which is like a great lazar-house; but if you carry Christ with you, you will never catch the world's disease. A man may be worth never so much money — he will never get worldly if he keepeth Christ on his heart. A man may have to tug and toil for his livelihood, and be very poor — he will never be discontented and murmuring if he lives close to Christ. Oh you who have to handle the world, see to it that you handle the Master more than the world. Some of you have to work with drunken and swearing men; others are cast into the midst of frivolities; oh, take my Master with you! and sin's plagues can have no influence upon your moral nature.

But myrrh was believed by the ancient physicians to do more than this; it was *a cure:* it did not merely prevent, but it healed. I do not know how many diseases are said to be healed by the use of myrrh, nor do I altogether suppose that these Oriental physicians spoke from facts, for they were too much given to ascribe qualities to drugs which those drugs did not possess; however, even modern physicians believe myrrh to have many valuable medical properties. Certain is it that your Christ is the best medicine for the soul. His name is Jehovah Rophi — "I am the Lord that healeth them." When we see Luke called

"the beloved physician," we almost grudge him the name. I will take it from him and give it to my Master, for he deserves it far more than Luke. The beloved physician! He touched the leper, and he was made whole. He did but look upon those who were lame, and they leaped as a hart. His voice startled the silence of Hades, and brought back the soul to the body. What cannot Christ do? He can heal anything. You who are sick this morning — sick with doubts and fears; you who are sick with temptation; you who struggle with an angry temper, or with the death-like sleep of sloth, — get Christ and you are healed. Here all things meet, and in all these things we may say, "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me."

I have not done yet; for myrrh was used in the East as a *beautifier*. We read of Esther, that, before she was introduced to Ahasuerus, she and the virgins were bidden to prepare themselves; and, among other things, they used myrrh. The belief of Oriental women was, that it removed wrinkles and stains from the face, and they used it constantly for the perfecting of their charms. I do not know how that may be, but I know that nothing makes the believer so beautiful as being with Christ. He is beautiful in the eyes of God, of holy angels, and of his fellowmen. I know some Christians whom it is a great mercy to speak to: if they come into your cottage, they leave behind them tokens of remembrance in the choice words they utter. To get them into the church is a thousand mercies; and if they join the Sunday-school, of what value they are! Let me tell you that the best gauge of a Christian's usefulness will be found in the degree in which he has been with Jesus and learned of him. Do not tell me it is the scholar, do not say to me it is the man of eloquence, do not say it is the man of substance, — well we would have all these consecrate what they have to Christ, — but it is the man of God who is the strong man; it is the man who has been with Jesus who is the pillar of the church and a light to the world. O brethren, may the beauty of the Lord be upon us through being much with Christ!

And I must not close this point without saying that myrrh

might well be used as an emblem of our Lord from *its connection with sacrifice*. It was one of the precious drugs used in making the holy oil with which the priests were anointed, and the frankincense which burned perpetually before God. It is this, the sacrificial character of Christ, which is at the root and bottom of all that Christ is most precious to his people. O Lamb of God, our sacrifice, we must remember thee!

II. Now there has been enough, surely, said about the myrrh. Have patience while we just notice that he is called a bundle of myrrh, or, as some translate it, a bag of myrrh, or a box of myrrh.

There were three sorts of myrrh: there was the myrrh in sprigs, which, being burnt, made a sweet smell; then there was myrrh, a dried spice; and then, thirdly, there was myrrh, a flowing oil. We do not know to which there is reference here. But why is it said, "a *bundle* of myrrh?" First, for *the plenty of it*. He is not a drop of it, — he is a casket full. He is not a sprig or flower of it, but a whole bundle full. There is enough in Christ for my necessities. There is more in Christ than I shall ever know — perhaps more than I shall understand, even in heaven.

A bundle, again, for *variety;* for there is in Christ not only the one thing needful, but "ye are complete in him." There is everything needful. Take Christ in his different characters, and you will see a marvellous variety, — prophet, priest, king, husband, friend, shepherd. Take him in his life, death, resurrection, ascension, second advent; take him in his virtue, gentleness, courage, self-denial, love, faithfulness, truth, righteousness — everywhere it is a bundle. Some of God's judgments are manifold, but *all* God's mercies are manifold; and Christ, being the sum of God's mercies, hath in fold upon fold of goodness. He is "a bundle of myrrh" for variety.

He is a bundle of myrrh, again, for *preservation*, — not loose myrrh to be dropped on the floor or trodden on, but myrrh tied up, as though God bound up all virtues and excellencies in his

Son; not myrrh spilt on the ground, but myrrh in a box, — myrrh kept in a casket. Such is Christ. The virtue and excellence which goeth out of Christ is quite as strong to-day as in the day when the woman touched the hem of his garment and was healed. "Able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God through him," is he still unto this hour.

A bundle of myrrh, again, to show *how diligently we should take care of it.* We must bind him up; we must keep our thoughts of him and knowledge of him as under lock and key, lest the devil should steal anything from us. We must treasure up his words, prize his ordinances, obey his precepts; tie him up, and keep him ever with us as a precious bundle of myrrh.

And yet again, a bundle of myrrh *for speciality*, as if he were not common myrrh for everybody. No, no, no; there is distinguishing, discriminating grace, — a bundle tied up for his people, and labelled with their names, from before the foundation of the world. No doubt there is an allusion here to the scent-bottle used in every land. Jesus Christ is a bottle of myrrh, and he doth not give forth his smell to everybody, but to those who know how to draw forth the stopper — who understand how to get into communion with him, to have close dealings with him. He is not myrrh for all who are in the house, but for those who know how to put the bottle to their nostrils and receive the sweet perfume. O blessed people, whom the Lord hath admitted into his secrets! O choice and happy people, who are thus made to say, "A bottle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me."

But I am afraid I tire you, especially those of you who do not know anything about my subject. There are some such here who know no more about what I am talking of than if they were Mahometans. They are listening to a new kind of religion now. The religion of Christ is as high above them as is the path of the eagle above that of the fish, and as much hidden from them as the way of the serpent on the rock from the eye of man. This is a path which the eagle's eye hath not seen, nor hath the lion's whelp trodden it; but I trust there are some here who know it.

III. Our third remark was to be, that with a sense of Christ's preciousness is combined A CONSCIOUSNESS OF POSSESSION. It is "*my* well-beloved." My dear hearer, is Christ *your* well-beloved? *A* Saviour — that is well; but *my* Saviour — that is the best of the best. What is the use of bread, if it is not mine? I may die of hunger. Of what value is gold, if it be not mine? I may yet die in a workhouse. I want this preciousness to be *mine*. "*My* well-beloved." Have you ever laid hold on Christ by the hand of faith?

Will you take him again this morning, brethren in Jesus? I know you will. Would that those who never did take him would take him now, and say, "*My* Saviour." There stands his atonement, freely offered to you; may you have the grace to take it, and say, "My Saviour, my Saviour," this morning. Has your heart taken him? It is well for us to use both hands; not only the hand of faith, but the hand of love, for this is the true embrace when both arms meet around our beloved. Do you love him? O souls, do you LOVE Christ, with an emphasis upon the word? Do not talk to me about a religion which dwells in the head and never gets into the heart. Get rid of it as quickly as you can; it will never bring you to heaven. It is not "I believe this and that" merely, but "I love." Ah! some who have been great fools in doctrine have been very wise in love. We tell our children to learn things "by heart." I think you can; you love Jesus; and if you cannot, you must confess, as I do —

> "A very wretch, Lord, I should prove,
> Had I no love to thee;
> Sooner than not my Saviour love,
> Oh may I cease to be."

But that is not the only word. "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved *unto me*." That is not a redundant expression, "unto *me*." He is not so to many. Ah! my Lord is a root out of a dry ground to multitudes. A three volume novel suits them better than his Book. They would sooner go to a play or a dance than they would have any fellowship with him. They

can see the beauties upon the cheeks of this Jezebel world, but they cannot see the perfections of my Lord and Master. Well! well! well! Let them say what they will, and let them think as they please; every creature hath its own joy; but "a bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto *me*" — unto *me* — unto *me;* and if there is not another who finds him so, yet "a bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto *me*." I would it were not with others as it is; I would that others did think so also of him: but let them say what they will, they shall not drive me out of my knowledge of this — "a bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved *unto me*." The infidel saith, "There is no God." The atheist would altogether laugh me to scorn. They shall say what they will, but "a bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved *unto me*." Even bishops have been found who will take away a part of his Book, and so rend his garments, and rob him; and there be some who say his religion is out of date, and grace has lost his power; and they go after philosophy and vain conceit, and I know not what; but "a bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved *unto me*." They may have no nostril for him, they may have no desire after him; so let it be; but "a bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved *unto me*." I know there are some who say they have tried him and not found him sweet, and who have turned away from him and gone back to the beggarly elements of the world, because they see nothing in Christ that they should desire him; but "a bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved *unto me*." Ah, Christian! this is what you want — a personal experience, a positive experience; you want to know for *yourself*, for there is no religion which is worth a button which is not burnt into you by personal experience; and there is no religion worth a straw which does not spring from your soul, which does lay not hold upon the very vitals of your spirit. Yes, you must say — I hope you can say as you go down those steps this morning, and enter again to-morrow into that busy, giddy world — you must say, "Let the whole world go astray, 'a bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto *me*.'"

IV. Now, the practical point closes it. A SENSE OF POSSESSION AND A SENSE OF ENJOYMENT WILL ALWAYS LEAD THE CHRISTIAN TO DESIRE CONSTANT FELLOWSHIP. "He," or, rather, "it, shall lie all night betwixt my breasts." The church does not say, "I will put this bundle of myrrh on my shoulders," — Christ is no burden to a Christian. She does not say, "I will put this bundle of myrrh on my back," — the church does not want to have Christ concealed from her face. She desires to have him where she can see him, and near to her heart. The bundle of myrrh shall lie all night upon my heart. The words "all night" are not in the original; I do not know how they got into the translation. He is to be always there, not only all night but all day. It would be always night if he were not there, and it cannot be night when he is there, for —

> "Midst darkest shade, if he appear,
> My dawning has begun."

He shall always be upon our heart. I think that expression just means these three things: It is an expression of *desire*, — her desire that she may have the consciousness of Christ's love continually. Do not you feel the same desire? O Christian! if thou hast ever been made like the chariots of Aminadab, it will be ill for thee if thou canst be content to be otherwise. If thou hast but once tasted Christ, thou wilt want to feed upon him all day and all night, and as long as thou livest. My desire is that Jesus may abide with me from morn till even, in the world and in the church, when I awake, when I sleep, when I go abroad, and when I come home into the bosom of my family. Is not that your desire that he may be always with you?

But, then, it is not only her desire, but it is also her *confidence*. She seems to say, "He will be with me thus." You may have a suspension of visible fellowship with Christ, but Christ never will go away from his people really. He will be all night betwixt your breasts; he will at all times abide faithful to you. He may close his eyes and hide his face from you, but his heart never can depart from you. He has set you as a seal upon his

heart, and increasingly will make you sensible of it. Recollect there is no suspension of Christ's union with his people, and no suspension of those saving influences which always make his people to stand complete in him.

To conclude: this is also a *resolve.* She desires, she believes, and she resolves it. Lord, thou shalt be with me; thou shalt be with me always. I appeal to you, brethren, will you not make this resolve in God's strength this morning to cling close to Christ. Do not go talking, as you go home, about all sorts of nonsense; do not spend this afternoon in communion with folly and vanity, but throughout this day let your soul keep to Christ, to nothing but Christ. This evening we shall come to his table, to eat bread and drink wine, in remembrance of him; let us try, if we can, that nothing shall make us give up Christ all this day. Have you got him, hold him, and do not let him go till you bring him to your mother's house, to the chamber of her who bare you. Then there will be the family prayer at night. Oh, seek to keep him till you put your head upon the pillow. And then, on Monday morning some of you have to go to work, and as soon as you get into the workshop or the factory, you say, "Now I must lose my Master." No, do not lose him. Hold him fast when your hand plies the hammer, and when your fingers hold the needle still cling to him; in the market or in the exchange, on board ship or in the field, do not let him go. You *may have him with you all day.* The Mahometan usually wears a piece of the Koran round his neck; and one, when converted to Christianity, put his New Testament in a little silken bag, and always wore it there. We need not such outward signs, but let us always have the Saviour there; let us hang him about our neck as a charm against all evil; seek his blessed company; place him as a star upon your breast, to be your honor and joy.

Well, I have done; but I must have a word with the unconverted. There are some who can say, "I will have Christ always *on my tongue.*" Away with tongue religion! You must have him on your heart. Ah! there are some who say, "*I hope*

I shall have Christ on my heart *in all eternity*." You cannot have Christ in eternity if you do not have him in time. If you despise him to-day in this life, he will reject you to-morrow in the world to come; and if *he* call and you refuse, one day *you* will call and he refuse. *Do not put up with desires merely*, dear friends; some of you have desires, and nothing more Do not only desire Christ, but get him. Do not stop short with saying, "I should like to have him in my heart;" give no sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids till by humble faith you have taken Christ to be your all in all. May the Lord bless these poor words, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

SERMON XV.

THE LAMB: THE LIGHT.

"AND THE CITY HAD NO NEED OF THE SUN, NEITHER OF THE MOON, TO SHINE IN IT: FOR THE GLORY OF GOD DID LIGHTEN IT, AND THE LAMB IS THE LIGHT THEREOF."— Rev. xxi. 23.

To the lover of Jesus it is very pleasant to observe how the Lord Jesus Christ has always stood foremost in glory from before the foundation of the world, and will do so as long as eternity shall last. If we look back by faith to the time of the creation, we find our Lord with his Father as one brought up with him. "When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: when he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep." He was that wisdom who was never absent from the Father's counsels in the great work of creation, whether it be the birth of angels or the making of worlds of men. One of the first events ever recorded in Scripture history is, "When he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, let all the angels of God worship him." Such words were never spoken of any creature, but only of him who is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, glorious forever; the first-born of every creature, the head of the household of God, the express image of his person, and the fulness of his glory. In the earliest periods of which we possess any knowledge, Jesus Christ stood exalted far

above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named. When human history dawns, and the history of God's church commences, you still find Christ pre-eminent. All the types of the early church are only to be opened up by him as the key. It would have been nothing to be of the seed of Israel, if it had not been for the promise of the Shiloh that was to come; it would have been in vain that the sacrifices were offered in the wilderness, that the ark abode between the curtains, or that the golden pot which had the manna was covered with the mercy-seat, if there had not been a real signification of Christ in all these. The religion of the Jew would have been very emptiness if it had not been for Christ, who is the substance of the former shadows. Run on to the period of the prophets, and in all their prophesyings do you not see additional glimpses of the glory of Christ? When they mount to the greatest heights of eloquence do they not speak of him? Whenever their soul is carried up, as in a chariot of fire, is not the mantle left behind them a word telling of the glory of Jesus? They could never glow with fervent heat, except concerning him. Even when they denounced the judgments of God, they paused between the crashes of God's thunder to let some drops of mercy fall on man in words of promise concerning him who was to come. It is always Christ from the opening leaf of Genesis to the closing note of Malachi, — Christ, Christ, Christ, and nothing but Christ. It is very delightful, brethren, when we come to such a text as this, to observe that what was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen. In that millennial state of which the text speaks, Jesus Christ is to be the light thereof, and all its glory is to proceed from him; and if the text speaketh concerning heaven and the blessedness hereafter, all its light and blessings and glory stream from him: "The Lamb is the light thereof." If we read the text, and think of its connection with us to-day, we must confess that all our joy and peace flow from the same fountain. Jesus Christ is the Sun of Righteousness to us as well as to the saints above.

I shall try, then, — though I am conscious of my feebleness to

handle so great a matter, — I shall try, as best I can, to extol the Lord Jesus, first of all, in the excellence of his glory *in the millennial state ;* next, *in heaven ;* and then, thirdly, *in the condition of every heavenly-minded man who is on his way to paradise.* In all these cases "the Lamb is the light thereof."

I. First, then, a few words concerning THE MILLENNIAL PERIOD.

We are not given to prophesyings in this place. There are some of our brethren who delight much in them. Perhaps it is well that there should be some who should devote their time and thoughts to that portion of God's Word which abounds in mysteries ; but, for our part, we have been so engaged in seeking to win souls, and in endeavoring to contend with the common errors of the day, that we have scarcely ventured to land upon the rock of Patmos, or to peer into the dark recesses of Daniel and Ezekiel. Yet this much we have ever learned most clearly — that on this earth, where sin and Satan gained victory over God through the fall of man, Christ is to achieve a complete triumph over all his foes ; not on another battle-field, but on this. The fight is not over. It commenced by Satan's attack upon our mother Eve ; and Christ has never left the field from that day until now. The fight has lasted thousands of years ; it grows sterner every day ; it is not over ; and it never shall be stayed until the serpent's head is effectually bruised, and Christ Jesus shall have gotten unto himself a perfect victory. Do not think the Lord will allow Satan to have even so much as one battle to call his own. In the great campaign, when the history shall be written, it shall be said : "The Lord reigneth ;" all along the line he hath gotten the victory. There shall be victory in every place and spot ; and the conquest of Jesus shall be complete and perfect. We believe, then, that in this very earth, where superstition has set up its idols, Jesus Christ shall be adored. Here, where blasphemy has defiled human lips, songs of praise shall rise from islands of the sea and from the dwellers among the rocks. In this very country, among those very men who became the tools

of Satan, and whose dwelling-places were dens of mischief, there shall be found instruments of righteousness, lips to praise God, and occasions of eternal glory unto the Most High. O Satan! thou mayst boast of what thou hast done, and thou mayst think thy sceptre still secure ; but he cometh, even he who rides upon the white horse of victory ; and when he comes, thou shalt not stand against him, for the two-edged sword which goeth out of his mouth shall drive thee and thy hosts back to the place from whence thou camest. Let us rejoice that Scripture is so clear and so explicit upon this great doctrine of the future triumph of Christ over the whole world!

We are not bound to enter into any particulars concerning what form that triumph shall assume. We believe that the Jews will be converted, and that they will be restored to their own land. We believe that Jerusalem will be the central metropolis of Christ's kingdom ; we also believe that all the nations shall walk in the light of the glorious city which shall be built at Jerusalem. We expect that the glory which shall have its centre there shall spread over the whole world, covering it as with a sea of holiness, happiness, and delight. For this we look with joyful expectation. During that period the Lord himself, by his glorious presence, shall set aside the outward rites of his sanctuary. "The city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it." Perhaps by sun and moon here are intended those ordinary means of enlightenment which the church now wants. We want the Lord's Supper to remind us of the body and blood of Christ ; but when Christ comes there will be no Lord's Suppers, for it is written, "Do this until he come:" but when he comes, then will be the final period of the remembrance-token, because the person of Christ will be in our midst. Neither will you need ministers any longer, any more than men need candles when the sun ariseth. They shall not say one to another, "Know the Lord : for all shall know him, from the least to the greatest." There may be even in that period certain solemn assemblies and Sabbath-days, but they will not be of the same kind as we have now ; for the whole earth will be a temple : every

day will be a Sabbath ; the avocations of men will all be priestly ; they shall be a nation of priests — distinctly so ; and they shall day without night serve God in his temple ; so that everything to which they set their hand shall be a part of the song which shall go up to the Most High. O, blessed day ! Would God it had dawned, when these temples should be left, because the whole world should be a temple for God. But whatever may be the splendors of that day, — and truly here is a temptation to let our imagination revel, — however bright may be the walls set with chalcedony and amethyst, however splendid the gates which are of one pearl, whatever may be the magnificence set forth by the "streets of gold," this we know, that the sum and substance, the light and glory of the whole will be the person of our Lord Jesus Christ ; "for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Now, I want the Christian to meditate over this. In the hightest, holiest, and happiest era that shall ever dawn upon this poor earth, Christ is to be her light. When she puts on her wedding garments, and adorns herself as a bride is adorned with jewels, Christ is to be her glory and her beauty. There shall be no ear-rings in her ears made with other gold than that which cometh from his mine of love ; there shall be no crown set upon her brow fashioned by any other hand than his hands of wisdom and of grace. She sits to reign, but it shall be upon *his* throne ; she feeds, but it shall be upon *his* bread ; she triumphs, but it shall be because of the might which ever belongs to him who is the Rock of Ages. Come then, Christian, contemplate for a moment thy beloved Lord. Jesus, in a millennial age, shall be the light and the glory of the city of the New Jerusalem. Observe, then, that Jesus makes the light of the millennium, because *his presence will be that which distinguishes that age from the present.* That age is to be akin to paradise. Paradise God first made upon earth, and paradise God will last make. Satan destroyed it ; and God will never have defeated his enemy until he has re-established paradise — until once again a new Eden shall bless the eyes of God's creatures. Now, the very glory and privilege of Eden I take to be

not the river which flowed through it with its four branches, nor that it came from the land of Havilah which hath dust of gold; I do not think the glory of Eden lay in its grassy walks, or in the boughs bending with luscious fruit; but its glory lay in this, that the "Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day." Here was Adam's highest privilege, that he had companionship with the Most High. In those days angels sweetly sang that the tabernacle of God was with man, and that he did dwell amongst them. Brethren, the paradise which is to be regained for us will have this for its essential and distinguishing mark, that the Lord shall dwell amongst us. This is the name by which the city is to be called — Jehovah Shammah, the Lord is there. It is true we have the presence of Christ in the church now — "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." We have the promise of his constant indwelling — "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." But still that is vicariously by his Spirit, but soon he is to be personally with us. That very man who once died upon Calvary is to live here. He — that same Jesus — who was taken up from us, shall come in like manner as he was taken up from the gazers of Galilee. Rejoice, rejoice, beloved, that he comes, actually and really comes; and this shall be the joy of that age, that he is among his saints, and dwelleth in them, with them, and talketh and walketh in their midst.

The presence of Christ it is which will be the means of the peace of the age. In that sense Christ will be the light of it, for *he* is our peace. It will be through his presence that the lion shall eat straw like an ox, that the leopard shall lie down with the kid. It will not be because men have had more enlightenment, and have learned better, through advancing civilization, that they shall beat their swords into ploughshares. It is notorious that the more civilized nations become, the more terrible are their instruments of destruction; and when they do go to war, the more bloody and protracted their wars become. I venture to say that if in a thousand years' time Christ shall not come, if war were to break out, where we now fight for ten or twenty years, we shall

have the venomous hatred of one another, and the means of carrying on a war for a century. Instead of advancing in peacefulness, I do fear me the world has gone back. We certainly cannot boast now of living in halcyon days of peace. But Christ's presence shall change the hearts of men. Then, spontaneously, at sight of the great Prince of Peace, they shall cast away their armor and their weapons of war, and shall learn war no more. In that sense, then, because his presence will be the cause of that happy period, he is the light of it.

Again: Christ's presence is to that period *its special instruction.* They shall need no candle, neither light of the sun, nor of the moon. Why? Because Christ's presence will be sufficiently instructive to the sons of men. When the Lord Jesus Christ comes, superstition will not need an earnest testimony to confute it; it will hide its head. Idolatry will not need the missionary to preach against it; the idols he shall utterly abolish, and shall cast them to the moles and to the bats. Men and women, at the sight of Christ, and at the knowledge that he is reigning gloriously upon earth, will give up their unbelief. The Jew will recognize the Son of David, and the Gentile will rejoice to worship him who was once slain as the King of the Jews. The presence of Christ shall do more for the enlightenment of his church than the teaching of all her officers and ministers in all ages. She shall then in the sight of her Lord come to a fulness of knowledge, and have a perfect understanding of God's Word.

Once again: Christ will be the light of that period *in the sense of being its glory.* Oh! it is the glory of the Christian now to think that Christ reigns in heaven. In this we boast, in every season of depression and of downcasting, that he is exalted and sits at the right hand of the Father. But the glory of that age shall be that Christ is come; that he sits upon the throne of David, as well as upon the throne of God; that his enemies bow before him and lick the dust. Think, my brethren, of the splendor of that time, when from every nation and land they shall bring him tribute; when praises shall ascend from every land; when the

streets of that city shall be thronged every day with adoring worshippers; when he shall ride forth conquering and to conquer, and his saints shall follow him upon white horses! We sometimes have high days and holidays, when kings and princes go abroad, and the streets are full, and people crowd even to the chimney-pots to see them as they ride along; but what shall it be to see King Jesus crowned with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals! What a contrast between the cavalcade winding its way along the streets of Jerusalem, along the *via dolorosa* up to the mount of execution! — what a contrast, I say! Then women followed him and wept, but now men will follow him and shout for joy. Then he carried his cross, but now he shall ride in state; then his enemies mocked him, and gloated their eyes with his sufferings; but *then* his enemies shall be put to confusion, and covered with shame, and upon himself shall his crown flourish; then it was the hour of darkness, and the time of the prince of the pit; but now it shall be the day of light and the victory of Emmanuel, and the sounding of his praise both in earth and heaven. Contemplate this thought; and though I speak of it so feebly, yet it may ravish your hearts with transport that Christ is the Sun of that long-expected, that blessed day; that Christ shall be the highest mountain of all the hills of joy, the widest river of all the streams of delight; that whatever there may be of magnificence and of triumph, Christ shall be the centre and soul of it all. Oh to be present, and to see him in his own light, the King of kings and Lord of lords!

II. And now we will turn our thoughts another way from the millennial period to THE STATE OF THE GLORIFIED IN HEAVEN ITSELF. "The city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it."

The inhabitants of the better world are *independent of creature-comforts.* Let us think that over for a minute. We have no reason to believe that they daily pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." Their bodies shall dwell in perpetual youth. They

shall have no need of raiment; their white robes shall never wear out, neither shall they ever be defiled. Having food and raiment on earth, therewith we are content; but in heaven "they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these;" yet the fields yield them neither flax nor any other material for clothing, neither do the acres of heaven yield them bread. They are satisfied by leaning upon God, needing not the creature for support. They need no medicine to heal their disease, "for the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." They need no sleep to recruit their fatigue; and although sleep is sweet and balmy, — God's own medicine, — yet they rest not day nor night, but unweariedly praise him in his temple.

They need no social ties in heaven. We need here the associations of friendship and of family love; but they are neither married nor are given in marriage there. Whatever comfort they may derive from association with their fellows is something extra and beyond; they do not need any: their God is enough. They shall need no teachers there. They shall doubtless commune with one another concerning the things of God, and tell to one another the strange things which the Lord hath wrought for them; but they shall not need this by way of instruction: they shall be taught of the Lord, for in heaven "the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." There is an utter independence in heaven, then, of all the creatures. No sun and no moon are wanted; nay, no creatures whatever. Here we lean upon the friendly arm; but there they lean upon their Beloved, and upon him alone. Here we must have the help of our companions; but there they find all they want in Christ alone. Here we look to the meat which perisheth, and to the raiment which decays before the moth; but there they find everything in God. We have to use the bucket to get water from the well; but there they drink from the well-head, and put their lips down to the living water. Here the angels bring us blessings; but we shall want no messenger from heaven then. They shall need no Gabriels there to bring their love-notes from

God, for there they shall see *him* face to face. Oh! what a blessed time shall that be, when we shall have mounted above every second cause, and shall hang upon the bare arm of God! What a glorious hour when God and not his creatures, God and not his works, but God himself, Christ himself, shall be our daily joy!

> "Plunged in the Godhead's deepest sea,
> And lost in His immensity"—

Our souls shall then have attained the perfection of bliss.

While in heaven it is clear that the glorified are quite independent of creature aid, do not forget that *they are entirely dependent for their joy upon Jesus Christ.* He is their sole spiritual light. They have nothing else in heaven to give them perfect satisfaction but himself. The language here used, "The Lamb is the light thereof," may be read in two or three ways. By your patience, let us so read it.

In heaven Jesus is the light in the sense of *joy*, for light is ever in Scripture the emblem of joy. Darkness betokens sorrow, but the rising of the sun indicates the return of holy joy. Christ is the joy of heaven. Do they rejoice in golden harps, in palm branches and white robes? They may do so, but they only rejoice in these things as love-gifts from *him.* Their joy is compounded of this: "Jesus chose us, Jesus loved us, Jesus bought us, Jesus washed us, Jesus robed us, Jesus kept us, Jesus glorified us; here we are, entirely through the Lord Jesus —through him alone." Each one of these thoughts shall be to them like a cluster from the vines of Eshcol. Why, methinks there is an eternal source of joy in that one thought, "Jesus bought me with his blood." Oh, to sit on the mountains of heaven and look across to the lowly hill of Calvary, and see the Saviour bleed! What emotions of joy shall stir the depths of our soul when we reflect that there upon the bloody tree he counted not his life dear unto him that he might redeem us unto God!

> "Calvary's summit shall I trace,
> View the heights and depths of grace,
> Count the purple drops, and say,
> 'Thus my sins were washed away.'"

In glory they think of the character and person of Jesus, and these are wells of delight to them. Thus they muse : Jesus is eternal God ; his enemies reviled him, but still he is God. Jesus became the virgin's child ; Jesus lived a life of holiness, and Jesus died ; but see what triumph springs from his condescension and his shame ! He rises, he ascends, and leads captivity captive ; he scatters gifts amongst men ; he reigns over earth and hell and heaven, King of kings, and Lord of lords. "The government shall be upon his shoulder : and his name shall be called Wonderful, The Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." When I have listened to Handel's music in "The Messiah," where that great musician wakes every instrument to praise the name of Jesus, I have felt ready to die with excess of delight that such music should ever have been composed by mortal man to the honor of our great Messiah ; but what will be the music of celestial choirs ? How would such hearts as ours burst, and such souls as ours leap out of their bodies, if they could but know while here such joys as celestials know above ! But, beloved, our faculties shall be strengthened, our capacities shall be enlarged, our whole being shall be expanded ; and thus we shall be able to bear the full swell of seraphic music, and join in it without fainting from delight, while they sing of the glory of the Son of Man — the Son of God. Christ is the light of heaven, then, because he is the substance of its joy.

Light may be viewed in another sense. Light is the cause of *beauty*. That is obvious to you all. Take the light away, and there is no beauty anywhere. The fairest woman charms the eye no more than a heap of ashes when the sun has departed. Your garden may be gay with many-colored flowers, but when the sun goeth down you cannot know them from the grass which borders them. You look upon the trees, all fair with the verdure of summer ; but when the sun goes down they are all hung in black. Without light no radiance flashes from the sapphire, no peaceful ray proceedeth from the pearl. There is naught of beauty left when light is gone. Light is the mother of beauty.

In such sense the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the light of heaven; that is to say, all the beauty of the saints above comes from God incarnate. Their excellence, their joy, their triumph, their glory, their ecstatic bliss, all spring from him. As planets, they reflect the light of the Sun of Righteousness. They live as beams proceeding from the central orb — as streams leaping from the eternal fountain. If he withdrew, they must die; if his glory were veiled, their glory must expire. Think of this, Christian, and I am sure you will be reminded how true this is beneath the sky, as well as above, — that if light be the mother of beauty, Christ is the light. There is nothing good, nor comely, nor gracious about any one of us, except as we get it from Christ, and from Christ Jesus alone. "The Lamb is the light thereof."

Another meaning of light, in Scripture, is *knowledge*. Ignorance is darkness. Now, in heaven they need no candle, neither light of the sun, because they receive light enough from Christ, — Christ being the fountain of all they know. I think it is Dr. Dick who speaks about the enjoyments of heaven consisting very likely in going from star to star and viewing the works of God in different portions of his universe, admiring the anatomy of living creatures, studying geology, ferrying across the waving of ether, and voyaging from world to world. I do not believe in such a heaven for a moment. I do not conceive it a worthy employment for immortal spirits; and if there were nothing else to make me think so, the text would be enough: "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it." There is no need of the works of God to give instruction to its inhabitants, "for the glory of God did lighten it." The glory, not of God's works, but of God's Son, is their glorious light.

"The spacious earth and spreading flood
Proclaim the wise and powerful God;
And thy rich glories from afar
Sparkle in every rolling star.

"But in his looks a glory stands,
The noblest labor of thy hands:

> The pleasing lustre of his eyes
> Outshines the wonders of the skies."

They need no light of the sun and moon where Jesus is. However well the sun and moon may tell of God, we shall not want them from day to day to send forth their line throughout all the earth, and their word unto the end of the world, for the glory of Christ will teach us all we wish to learn; and beholding the unveiled glory of God will be better far than prying into the works of nature, even though we had an angel's power of discovery. We shall know more of Christ in five minutes, I ween, when we get to heaven, than we shall know in all our years on earth. Dr. Owen was a master of theology; but the smallest child who goes to heaven from a Sunday-school knows more of Christ after being in heaven five minutes, than Dr. Owen did. John Calvin searched very deep, and Augustine seemed to come to the very door of the great secret; but Augustine and Calvin would be but children on the first form there — I mean if they knew no more than on earth. Oh! what manifestations of God there will be! Dark dealings of providence, which you never understood before, will then be seen without the light of a candle or of the sun. Many doctrines puzzled you, and you could not find the clue to the labyrinth of mystery; but there all will be simple and plain, so that the wayfaring man may run and understand it. You have had many experiences and tossings to and fro, and you have felt your ignorance, your corruption and weakness; but there you shall see to the very bottom of human nature: you shall understand the virulence of man's depravity, and the heights of God's sovereignty, the marvels of electing love, and the magnificence of his divine power, by which he has made us to be partakers of the divine nature.

> "There you shall see and hear and know
> All you desired or wished below,
> And every power find sweet employ
> In that eternal world of joy."

And this knowledge, I say, shall not come from any inferior

agent, but from the Lord God, who shall be your glory, and from Jesus Christ himself, who shall teach you all truth.

I must not dwell long on this point, except to say this one thing, — that light also means *manifestation*. "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." Light manifests. In this world it doth not yet appear how great we must be made. God's people are a hidden people — their life is hid with Christ in God. They possess God's secret, and that secret other men cannot discover. Christ in heaven is the great revealer of God's mind; and when he gets his people there, he will touch them with the wand of his own love, and change them into the image of his manifested glory. They were poor and wretched — but, what a transformation! Their rags drop off, and they are acknowledged as princes. They were stained with sin and infirmity — but one touch of his finger, and they are bright as the sun and clear as crystal; transformed even as he was upon Mount Tabor; whiter than any fuller can make them. They were ignorant and weak on earth, but when He shall teach them they shall know even as they are known. They were buried in dishonor, but they are raised in glory; they were sown in the grave in weakness, but they are raised in power; they were carried away by the hands of remorseless death, but they arise to immortality and life. Oh! what a manifestation! Light is sown for the righteous, and Christ is the sacred rain that brings the harvest above ground. The righteous are always pearls; but they are hidden, as it were, in the oyster now, and Christ brings them forth. They were always diamonds; they were far away in the Golconda of sin; but Christ hath fetched them up from the deep mines. They were alway stars, but they were hidden behind the clouds. Christ, like a swift wind, hath blown the clouds away, and now they shine like stars in the firmament for ever and ever. In this sense Christ is the light of heaven, because it is through him that the true and real character of all the saints has been manifested.

Come, my soul, take wing a moment — it is not far for thee to fly. Mount thee, and walk the golden streets, and as thou walkest thou shalt see nothing but Jesus glorified. Come up to the throne, and thou shalt see Christ on it. Sit down and listen to the song, Christ is the theme ; go to the banquet, Christ is the meat ; mingle with the dancers, Christ is their joy ; make thou one in their great assemblies, and Christ is the God they worship : —

"'Worthy the Lamb that died,' they cry,
'To be exalted thus·'
'Worthy the Lamb,' our lips reply,
'For he was slain for us.'"

III. Let us turn to our last thought ; and here I hope we can speak experimentally, whereas on the other two points we could only speak by faith in the promise of God. THE HEAVENLY MAN'S STATE MAY BE SET FORTH IN THESE WORDS.

First, then, even on earth *the heavenly man's joy does not depend upon the creature.* Brethren, in a certain sense we can say to-day that "the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it." We love and prize the happy brightness which the sun scatters upon us. As for the moon, who does not admire the fair moonlight when the waves are silvered, and silent nature wears the plumage of the dove. But we do not need the sun or the moon ; we can do without them ; for the Sun of Righteousness has risen with healing beneath his wings. There are brothers and sisters here this morning who are very happy, and yet it is long since they saw the sun. Shut up in perpetual night, through blindness, they need not the light of the sun, nor of the moon, for the Lord God is their glory — Christ is their light. If our eyes should be put out, we could say, "Farewell, sweet light ; farewell, bright sun and moon ; we prize ye well, but we can do without ye, — Christ Jesus is to us as the light of seven days."

As we can do without these two most eminent creatures, so we can be happy without other earthly blessings. Our dear friends are very precious to us — we love our wife and children, our

parents and our friends, but we do not need them. May God spare them to us! But if they were taken, it does not come to a matter of absolute need, for you know, beloved, there is many a Christian who has been bereft of all ; and he thought, as the props were taken away one after another, that he should die of very grief. But he did not die ; his faith surmounted every wave, and he still rejoices in his God. I know that at the thought of those dear ones who are taken from you the sluices of your grief are drawn up ; but still I hope you will not be so false to Christ as to deny what I now say, — that his presence can make amends for all losses ; that the smilings of his face will make a paradise so sweet that no sorrow or sighing shall be heard in it.

> " Thee at all times will I bless;
> Having thee, I all possess;
> How can I bereaved be,
> Since I cannot part with thee? "

It is a very happy thing to be placed in circumstances where one knows no lack of bread, — to have a house, a comfortable home, and sufficiency for our family is very pleasant. But O, dear friends, if it comes to actual need, the Christian does not want this ; he needs no sun nor moon even here. Look at the chosen sons of poverty — they toil from morning to night, and never get a single inch beyond ; just living from hand to mouth ; but they are happy ; ah ! some of them infinitely happier than the rich man with all his sumptuous faring, and the fine linen with which he wraps himself. Why, there have been men, reduced all but to beggary, who have rejoiced far more in their poverty than others in their wealth. We have seen some of God's saints in the workhouse, or lingering in a dark, ill-furnished almsroom, and we have heard them speak as joyously about God and their state as if they were dwelling in mansions or palaces. Yes, many a poor child of God has learned to sing —

> " I would not change my blessed estate
> For all the world calls good or great;
> And while my faith can keep her hold,
> I envy not the sinner's gold."

For "this city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." *Health*, too, — who can prize it enough? When stretched upon the bed of sickness, then we begin to know how priceless a boon was a sound body; but ah! the Christian, though he loves health, can do without it. I have heard of Christians who have been blind, and who have been bed-ridden and have not stirred from their bed for many years, who could scarcely lift their hands through paralysis, and who never had stood upon their feet for years through some stroke of God's hand, yet have they delighted themselves in the Lord. They have laid there ill-nursed, ill-cared for, — simply living to illustrate to what degree a mortal man may become a mass of suffering and a prodigy of grief; and yet, as I have sometimes stood by such bedsides, I have heard more rapturous expressions concerning present joy and future prospects than from God's strongest saints in their healthiest hours. The dying girl, when consumption has paled her cheek and taken the flesh from off her poor aching bones, has nevertheless appeared in a sacred majesty of might, which showed me that she needed no moon nor sun to lighten her, no health nor strength to give her spirits, for the presence of Christ made her conqueror in the extremity of weakness, and victorious in the grim presence of Death itself. The Christian then, dear friends, leans upon the arm of God; he has pressed through the crowd of creatures; he has bidden them all retire that he might live nearer to his all-sufficient Lord; and if, when he has reached his Lord, the creatures turn their backs and go away, he saith, "There, ye may all go; I have him now; I embrace him now; he hath kissed me with the kisses of his lips; ye may spit on me, and ye will; now *he* has spoken softly to me, ye may curse me if ye please; now that he has told me I am his and he is mine, even my father and mother may forsake me, for the Lord hath taken me up." Yes, the heavenly man, even before he gets to heaven, hath no need of the sun nor of the moon, for the glory of God doth lighten him.

We finish by observing, that such a man, however, has great

need of Christ — he cannot get on without Christ. O beloved! if the sun were struck from the spheres, what a poor, dark, dreary world this would be! We should go groping about it, longing for the grave; but that would be nothing compared with our misery if Christ were taken away. O Christian man! what would you do without a Saviour? We should be of all men the most miserable — we who have once known him. Ah! you who do not know Christ, you can get on pretty well without him; like a poor slave who has never known liberty, and rests content in bondage. The bird in its cage, which never did fly over the fields, which has been born in the cage, can be pretty easy; but after we have once stretched our wings, and once know what liberty means, we cannot be shut out from our Lord. As the dove mourns itself to death when its mate is taken away, so should we if Christ were gone. We can do without light, without friendship, without life; but we cannot live without our Saviour. Oh! to be without Christ! My soul, what wouldst thou do in the world without him, in the midst of its temptations and its cares? What wouldst thou do in the morning without him, when thou wakest up and lookest forward to the day's battle? What wouldst thou do if he did not put his hand upon thee, and say, "Fear not, I am with thee"? And what wouldst thou do at night, when thou comest home jaded and weary, if there were no prayer, no door of access between thee and Christ? What should we do without Christ in our trials, our sicknesses? What should we do when we come to die, with no one to make our dying-bed feel soft as downy pillows are? Oh! if the infidel's laugh has truth in it, it may well ring bitterly in our ears, for it were a bitter truth to us. No Christ! Then to die indeed is dreadful. To have such high hopes, and to have them all blasted; such high, loud boastings, and to have our mouths stopped forever! But, beloved, we need not suppose such a thing; for we know that our Redeemer liveth, and we know that he never forsakes the work of his own hand. Married as he is to our souls, he will never sue out a divorce against any one of his dear people; but he will hold, and keep, and bless us till we die; and we on

our part will confess of our spiritual life that the Lamb is the light thereof. Of every day and every night, of every joy and every sorrow, the Lamb has been until now our light, and shall be till we die.

If this be so, how dark is the case of those who do not know the Lamb! In what misery and ignorance do you grope who do not know the Saviour! Would you know Christ, would you have the happiness of resting upon his bosom? Trust him, then; for whosoever trusteth him is saved. To trust Christ is that saving faith which brings the soul out of condemnation. "He that believeth on him is not condemned." Trust thou, guilty as thou art, trust thou to his atonement, and it shall wash thee; trust to his power, it shall prevail for thee; trust to his wisdom, it shall protect thee; trust to his heart, it shall love thee, world without end. Amen.

SERMON XVI.

GOD'S STRANGE CHOICE.

"FOR YE SEE YOUR CALLING, BRETHREN, HOW THAT NOT MANY WISE MEN AFTER THE FLESH, NOT MANY MIGHTY, NOT MANY NOBLE, ARE CALLED; BUT GOD HATH CHOSEN THE FOOLISH THINGS OF THE WORLD TO CONFOUND THE WISE; AND GOD HATH CHOSEN THE WEAK THINGS OF THE WORLD TO CONFOUND THE THINGS WHICH ARE MIGHTY; AND BASE THINGS OF THE WORLD, AND THINGS WHICH ARE DESPISED, HATH GOD CHOSEN, YEA, AND THINGS WHICH ARE NOT, TO BRING TO NOUGHT THINGS THAT ARE: THAT NO FLESH SHOULD GLORY IN HIS PRESENCE."—1 Corinthians i. 26–29.

THE Apostle Paul had been led to make the confession that Christ Jesus was despised both by Jew and Gentile. He confessed that this was no cause of stumbling to him; for what others counted foolishness he believed to be wisdom, and rejoiced that the foolishness of God was wiser than men, and the weakness of God stronger than men. Lest, however, any of the Corinthian Church should be stumbled by the fact that Christ was despised, the apostle goes on to show that it was the general way of God's proceeding, to select means which men despised, in order that by accomplishing his purpose through them, he might have all the glory: and he refers them for proof of this to the one instance of their own election and calling: "Ye see your calling, brethren," saith he, "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called;" but you, the poor, illiterate, the despised — you have been called — still for the same reason — that God may be all in all, and that no flesh may glory in his presence. It is clear to everyone who will observe either Scripture or fact, that God never

did intend to make his gospel fashionable; that the very last thing that was ever in his thoughts was to select the *élite* of mankind, and gather dignity for his truth from the gaudy trappings of rank and station. On the contrary, God has thrown down the gauntlet against all the pride of manhood; he hath dashed mire into the face of all human excellency; and with the battle-axe of his strength he has dashed the escutcheon of man's glory in twain. "Overturn! overturn! overturn!" seems to be the very motto of the Lord of Hosts, and shall be so "until He shall come whose right it is to reign, and he will give it him," for his is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. There is no doctrine more truly humbling than the doctrine of election; and it was for this reason that the Apostle Paul refers to it, — that the disciples at Corinth might be quite content to follow the humble and despised cross-bearing Saviour, because the election of grace consists of the humble and despised, who therefore cannot be ashamed to follow One who, like themselves, was despised and rejected of men.

Coming, then, at once to our text, we observe in it very clearly, first, *the Elector;* secondly, *a strange election;* then, *the elected;* and when we have considered all these a little, we shall pause over *the reasons which God has given for his election,* — that "no flesh should glory in his presence."

I. First, then, let us this morning soar aloft upon the wings of thought to consider for awhile the ELECTOR.

Some men are saved, and some are not saved; it remains as a fact never to be questioned, that some enter into eternal life, and some pursue the evil way and perish. How is this difference caused? How is it that some mount to heaven? The reason why any sink to hell is their sin, and only their sin; they will not repent, they will not believe in Christ, they will not turn to God, and therefore they perish wilfully by their own act and deed. But how is it that others are saved? Whose will is it that hath made them to differ? The text three times most peremptorily answers the question. It saith not "man hath chosen," but it saith

three times, "*God hath chosen, God hath chosen, God hath chosen.*" The grace which is found in any man, and the glory and eternal life to which any attain, are all the gifts of God's election, and are not bestowed according to the will of man.

This will be clear to any thoughtful person, if we first of all turn *to facts*. Wherever we find a case of election in the Old Testament, it is manifestly God who makes it. Go back, if you will, to the very earliest time. Angels fell: a multitude of bright spirits, who surrounded the throne of God and sang his praises, were deceived by Satan, and fell into sin. The great serpent drew with him the third part of the stars of heaven: they fell from their obedience; they were condemned to chains forever, and to eternal fire. Man sinned also. Adam and Eve broke the covenant with God, and ate of the forbidden fruit — were they condemned to eternal fire? Nay, but God, in the plenitude of his grace, whispered this promise in the woman's ear: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Some men are saved, but no devils are saved. Why? Did man make the difference? Silence, thou vain boaster, who dreamest of such a thing! It is God himself who testifies: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." It was from such sovereignty as this that the Lord virtually declared, "I purpose and decree, that of the race of man I will save a multitude that no man can number, who shall be the vessels of my mercy; while yonder angels, once my servants, but now traitors to their liege lord, shall, without hope forever, vindicate the terror of my righteousness the majesty of my justice." Here no one ever raises a question. I have never heard the most ultra-Pelagian enter a plea for the devil. I have heard of Origen, who did seem to plead that Satan should be included in the general law of mercy; but very few persons now-a-days talk so. Here is an instance of election, — some of the human race saved, and the angelic race left forever to perish. Who could have made this distinction but Jehovah himself? And we must say there of our favored race, "God hath chosen." We are not at a loss to see the

same discriminating sovereignty at work among the individuals of our own race. All men were in the patriarchal age sunken in heathenism, with but a few exceptions; there were a few patriarchs who still, chosen of God, held fast to the pure worship of the Most High. The Lord determined to adopt a special people, who should read the oracles of God, preserve and maintain the truth. He selected Abram as the progenitor of the chosen race. Did Abram choose God, or did God call and choose Abram? Was there anything naturally in Abram to entitle him to be the servant of the Most High? We have very plain proof in Scripture that there was not. He was, on the contrary, described as a Syrian ready to perish, and his race was, like the rest, tainted, to say the least, with idolatry; nevertheless he was called out of the east, and made the father of the faithful by God's own special will. What was there, let me ask you, in the Jews, why they should be blessed with prophets, and the sacrifices, and the rites and ordinances of true worship, while all the nations were left to bow down before gods of wood and stone? We can only say, God hath done it; his will lights upon the race of Israel, and leaves the rest in sin. Take any particular case of divine grace mentioned in the Old Testament, as, for instance, that of David. Do we find that David chose the throne, that David selected and set himself apart to be the chosen messenger of God to Israel? Was there some manifest fitness in the youngest son of Jesse? Nay, on the contrary, men had chosen his brethren; even Samuel said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before me," as he saw Abinadab go forth. But God seeth not as man seeth, and he had chosen the ruddy David that he might be king in Jeshurun. So might we multiply cases; but your own thoughts will spare my words. All the facts of the Old Testament go to show that God doeth as he wills in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower world. He pulleth down and he raiseth up; he lifteth the beggar from the dunghill that he may set him among the princes of his people. God hath chosen, God hath chosen, and not man. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."

Let us look at the matter in another light. Clearly the Lord's will must determine the matter, if we consider his office and position towards men. God's office. God is a king. Shall not the king have his own will? Men may set up a constitutional monarchy, and they are right in so doing; but if you could find a being who was perfection itself, an absolute form of government would be undeniably the best. At any rate, God's government is absolute, and though he never violates righteousness, — for he is holiness and truth itself, — yet he regards this jewel of his crown as being the dearest that he has. "I am, and there is none beside me." He giveth no account of his matters. Unto all questions he gives this answer: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" The absolute position of God as king demands that, especially in the work of salvation, his will should be the great determining force. Let us state the case, and you will see this. A number of criminals are shut up in prison, all deserving to die. Their guilt is the same. If they are all taken out to execution to-morrow morning, no one can say a word against justice. Now, if some of these persons be spared, to whose discretion should the sparing be left? To their own? True, it will be most gracious to send a messenger, and bid them all come forth and receive sparing mercy, if they will come. But suppose they all, with one consent, refuse to be saved; suppose that, having been invited to be saved, every one of them refuses to accept pardon. If, in such a case, superior mercy determines to override their wicked wills, and sets itself to secure that some of them shall effectually be saved, with whom shall the choice be left? If it were left with them, they would all of them still choose death rather than life; therefore it were useless to leave it with them. Besides, to leave the attribute of mercy in the hand of the criminal would be an exceedingly strange mode of procedure. Nay, let it be the king — let it be the king who shall say who it is that shall be spared in mercy, and who

shall die according to the rule of justice. The position of God as king, and the position of men as criminals, demands that salvation shall depend upon the will of God; and truly we may better leave it with his will than with our own, for he is kinder to us than we are to ourselves; he is more full of love to man than man is of love to himself. He is justice, he is love; justice in full-orbed splendor, love in unbounded might. Mercy and truth have met together in him, and kissed each other; and it is well, it is well, it is best of all, that the rule and management of salvation should be left with him.

We will now introduce to you a few figures made use of in Scripture in connection with the work of salvation, and I think you will then see that the will must be left with God. Salvation consists, in part, of an *adoption*. God adopts sinners, who were heirs of wrath, even as others, into his family. Who is to have authority in the matter of gracious adoption? The children of wrath? Surely not; and yet all men are such. No; it stands to nature, to reason, to common sense, that none but the parent can have the discretion to adopt. As a father, I have a right, if any desire to enter my family, to adopt or to refuse to adopt the persons in question; certainly no person can have a right to force himself upon me, and say that I shall be considered as his reputed parent. The right must, I say, according to reason and common sense, lie with the parent; and in adoption it must be God who chooses his own children.

The church, again, is called a *building*. With whom does the architecture of the building rest? With the building? With the stones? Do the stones select themselves? Did that stone just yonder in the corner choose its place? or that which is buried there in the foundation, did it select its proper position? No; the architect alone disposes of his chosen materials according to his own will; and thus, in building the church, which is the great house of God, the great Master-Builder reserves to himself the choice of the stones, and the places which they shall occupy.

Take a yet more apparent case. The church is called *Christ's bride*. Would any man here agree to have any person forced

upon him as his bride? There is not a man among us who would for a single moment so demean himself as to give up his right to choose his own spouse. And shall Christ leave to hap-hazard and to human will who his bride shall be? Nay; but my Lord Jesus, the Husband of the church, exercises the sovereignty which his position permits him, and selecteth his own bride.

Again: we are said to be *members of Christ's body*. We are told by David that in God's book "all our members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." Thus every man's body had its members written in God's book. Is Christ's body to be an exception to this rule? Is that great body of divine manhood, Christ Jesus, the mystical Saviour — is that to be fashioned according to the whims and wishes of free-will, while other bodies, vastly inferior, have their members written in the book of God? Let us not dream thus; it were to talk idly, and not to know the meaning of the metaphors of Scripture.

It seems clear to me, according to the figures and illustrations of Scripture, that the final choice of the men to be saved must be left with God. Is not this, dear friends, most agreeable to your own experience? I am sure it is to mine. There may be some who hate this doctrine, — there are many; there may be some whose very mouths foam while they hear us talk of the sovereignty of God; but I confess it touches a secret spring in my nature, which can compel me to weep when nothing else can. There is a something in my consciousness which seems to say, "He must have chosen me, for I never could have chosen him." Determined to live in sin was I; prone to wander; fond of iniquity, drinking down evil as the ox drinketh his fill of water; and now, saved by grace, dare I for a moment impute that salvation to my own choice? I do choose God most freely, most fully: but it must be because of some previous work upon my heart changing that heart, for my unrenewed heart never could have chosen him. Beloved, do you not feel at this very time that the natural bent of your thoughts is away from God? If the grace of God were taken off from you, what would you be? Are you

not just like the bow which is bent when the string keeps it so; but cut that string, and it flies back to its old place? Would it not be so with you? Would you not at once return to your former ways if the mighty grace of God were withdrawn from you? Well, then, you clearly see that if even now that you are regenerate your corrupt nature does not choose God, much less could it have chosen him when there was no new nature to keep it in check and to control it. My Master looks into your faces, O ye his people, and he says: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you;" and we each feel that he wakes the echo of our hearts, for we reply: "Ay, Lord, we have not chosen thee in our natural estate, but thou hast chosen us, and unto thy free and sovereign choice be honor for ever and ever."

II. May we feel the present influences of the Holy Spirit while we dwell upon the ELECTION ITSELF.

The Lord is about to choose a people who shall give honor to the cross of Christ. They are to be redeemed by precious blood, and they are to be in some sense a worthy reward for the great sufferings of Jesus. Now, observe how *strange* is the choice he makes. I read with astonishment, "He hath not chosen many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble." If man had received the power of choosing, these are just the persons who would have been selected: "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised." If man had governed the selection, these are the very persons who would have been left out. The choice is very strange — very strange; I believe even in heaven it will be the subject of eternal wonder, and, except for the reasons given in our text, we should have been at a loss to know why it was that with scorn divine he passed by the palaces of haughty kings, and looked after the base-born and the lowly to make them the subjects of his choice.

Observe, that while it is strange, it has this peculiarity about it,

— it is *directly contrary to human choice.* Man chooses those who would be most helpful to him: God chooses those to whom he can be the most helpful. We select those who may give us the best return; God frequently selects those who most need his aid. If I choose a friend, the tendency is to him because of a certain serviceableness that there may be in him to myself: this is the selfishness of man; but God chooses his friend according to the serviceableness which he himself may render to the chosen one. It is the very opposite way of choosing. We select those who are best because they are most deserving; he selects those who are worst because they are least deserving, that so his choice may be more clearly seen to be an act of grace and not of merit. I say it is clearly contrary to man's way of choosing. Man selecteth the most beautiful, the most lovely; God, on the contrary, seeing the blackness and filthiness of everything which is called lovely, will not select that which is called so, but takes that which even men discover to be unlovely, — makes it comely with the comeliness which he putteth upon it. Strange choice! Is this the manner of men, O Lord?

You will observe that the choice is *very gracious;* oh, how gracious in your case and in mine! It is gracious even in its exclusion. It does not say, "Not any wise men," it only says "Not many;" so that the great ones are not altogether shut out. Grace is proclaimed to the prince, and in heaven there are those who on earth wore coronets and prayed. How blessed is the condescending grace of the choice! it takes the weak things, the foolish things. One would have thought that when God said "Nay" to the prince, he must have said it in order that he might be excused from giving mercy to anybody; for we are in the habit of saying, "Well, we have refused Mr. So-and-so, and he is a much more important person than you are; therefore I cannot give the favor to you. Why! the king asked me such a favor, and I would not do it for him; do you think I would do it for you?" But God reasons another way: he passes by the king on purpose that he may meet with the beggar; he leaves the noble that he may lay hold upon the base, and passes over

the philosopher that he may receive the fool. Oh, this is strange, it is passing strange, it is marvellous; let us praise him for this wondrous grace.

Oh, how *encouraging* is this for us this morning! Some of us cannot boast of any pedigree; we have no great learning; we have no wealth; our names are all unknown to fame; but, oh! what a mercy! He has been pleased to choose just such foolish things as we are, such despised creatures as ourselves, such things that are not to bring to naught the things that are.

Not to spend all the time this morning in simply pointing at this strange choice and wondering at it, let it suffice us to observe that every Christian who finds himself chosen will think his own election to be the strangest choice that could have been made.

> "What was there in you that could merit esteem,
> Or give the Creator delight?
> 'T was 'Even so, Father!' you ever must sing,
> 'Because it seemed good in thy sight.'"

III. We will now turn to THE ELECTED. The chosen ones are described negatively and positively.

They are described *negatively*. "Not many wise men after the flesh." Observe, it does not say, "Not many wise men" merely, but "not many wise men *after the flesh;*" because God *has* chosen truly wise men, since all his people are made truly wise, but it is the "wise *after the flesh*" that God has not chosen. The "*sophoi*," as the Greek calls them, the philosophers, the men who pretend to wisdom or to love wisdom, the cunning, the metaphysical, the great students, the keen observers, the rabbis, the doctors, the infallibles, the men who look down with profound scorn upon the illiterate and call them idiots, treat them as if they were the dust beneath their feet, — these are not chosen in any great number. Strange, is it not? And yet a good reason is given. If they were chosen, why, then they would say: "Ah! how much the gospel owes to us! How our wisdom helps it!" If the first twelve apostles had all been twelve doctors or sages, everybody would have said: "Why, of course the gospel was

mighty; there were the twelve picked wise men of Judea, or of Greece, to support it." But, instead of that, God looks round the creeks and bays after twelve poor fishermen, who are as ignorant as any he can find; he takes them, and they become the apostles; they spread the gospel, and the gospel has the glory, and not the apostles. The wise are passed by in the wisdom of God.

Observe next, he says, "Not many mighty." The wise might have forced their way to heaven by their wit, one would think; but there they are with their blind learning, fumbling for the latch of heaven's door, while the illiterate and simple-minded have already entered it. Blind wisdom gropes in the dark, and, like the wise men, it goes to Jerusalem in vain, while poor, humble shepherds go to Bethlehem and find Christ at once. Here comes another order of great men. The mighty men, the valiant champions, the princes, his Imperial Highness, the conquerors, the Alexanders, the Napoleons, — are not these chosen? Surely when the king becomes a Christian, he can with his sword compel others to receive Christ: why not choose him? "No," says the text, "not many mighty." And you see why; because, if the mighty had been chosen, we should all say, "Oh, yes, we see why Christianity spreads so: it is the good temper of its sword-blade, and the strength of the arm that wields it." We can all understand the progress of Mahometanism during its first three centuries. Men like Ali and Khaled were ready to smite whole nations; they leaped upon their steeds, waved their scymetars over their heads, and dashed against hundreds, fearless of the fight. And it was only when they met such men as our Richard Cœur de Lion that Mahomtanism was put back for awhile; when the sword met sword, then they that took it perished with it. Christ chose no warriors: one of his disciples used a sword, but it was to very poor effect, for he only cut off a man's ear; and Christ touched that and healed it, and there was an end of poor Peter's fighting. So that the glory of the Lord's conquests does not depend upon the mighty; God has not chosen them.

Then he says, "Not many noble," by which he means those

with a long pedigree, descended, through a line of princes, from the loins of kings, with blue blood in their veins. "Not many noble," for nobility might have been thought to stamp the gospel with its prestige. "Oh, yes! there is no wonder that the gospel spreads when my lord this, and the duke of that bends to it." Ay, but you see there were few such in the early church. The saints in the catacombs were poor, humble men and women; and it is a very memorable fact that out of all the inscriptions in the catacombs of Rome, written by the early Christians, there is scarcely one which is properly spelt; but nearly all of them are as bad in grammar as they are in spelling,—a clear proof that they were scratched there by poor, illiterate, ignorant men, who were then the defenders of the faith, and the true conservators of the grace of God.

We have thus the negative side — not the wise, not the mighty, not the noble. But now the *positive* side, — and I want your careful attention to the expression used by the apostle. "God hath chosen the foolish men?" — no, it does not say so — "the foolish *things;*" as if the Lord's chosen were not by nature good enough to be called men, but were only "things;" as if the world looked down on them with such scorn that they did not say, "Who are these men?" but "Who are these things?" Once or twice in Luke you will observe Christ called a "fellow;" but the word "fellow" is put in italics, not being in the original; for the Greek runs, "As for this ——, we know not whence he is." They did not say what he was, did not even call him a "fellow," though the translation is very good, as giving a correct idea to the ordinary reader. They seem to say of Christ, "As for this — well, call him a beast if you like, a thing if you like;" and so Paul has put it here, "the foolish *things;*" not simply foolish *men* whom the world should consider to be unlearned, ignorant, stupid dolts, led by the nose and easily deceived into beliving this or that, but "foolish things," which are nothing but stupidity, hath God chosen.

Next, God hath chosen "the weak things." Do observe the word "things" with care; they were not merely weak men, but

the world thought them weak *things*. "Ah!" said Cæsar in the hall, if he said anything at all about it, "who is King Jesus? a poor wretch who was hanged upon a tree! Who are these men that are setting him up? twelve poor fishermen who could hardly muster one single talent of gold between them! Who is this Paul who raves so lustily about Christ? a tentmaker! Who are his followers? a few despised women who meet him at the water-side! Is Paul a philosopher? no, he was publicly laughed at upon Mars' Hill; they counted what he said to be mere babbling." No doubt Cæsar thought they were altogether too inconsiderable to be worthy of his notice; but the "weak things" God hath chosen.

Observe the next description: "The base things." The word there signifies things without pedigree, things without a father, things which cannot trace their descent; no Sir Harry, no Right Honorable is akin to them; their father was a nobody, and their mother was a nothing. Such were the apostles of old; they were the base things of this world, and yet God chose them.

As if this were not enough, it is written: "Things that are despised," — sneered at, persecuted, hunted about, or treated with what is worse, with the indifference which is worse than scorn. "They are not worth notice, — inconsiderable fools, pass them by and let them alone," — and yet these had God chosen.

Once more, as if to outdo all, and sum it up in one word, "things that are not" hath God chosen. Nothings, nonentities. "Oh!" says the man of the world, "yes, I did just hear that there were a parcel of fanatics of that kind." "Oh!" says another, "I never even heard of them. I never mix myself up in any way with such a low-bred, vulgar set. Did they ever have a bishop among them? a Right Rev. Father in God?" No, nothing of the kind, sir; they are foolish, base, mean, despised; the world, therefore, rejects them. "Yet," saith God, "I choose them." They are the very people that he chooses. Now, observe that what was true in Paul's day is true now, for the Bible does not change as years revolve; and in one thousand eight hundred and sixty-four God chooses the things which are

despised just as much as in the year sixty-four; and he will yet let the world know that those who are ridiculed, styled fanatics, thought to be mad and wicked, are yet, after all, his chosen ones destined for God and for his truth to rally the sacramental host of the elect, and win for God the battle of the last day. In this we are not ashamed to glory, that God chooseth the things which are despised; and we can take our place with the despised people of God, hopeful to partake in the election of his sovereign grace.

IV. To conclude: you have THE REASONS WHY GOD HAS CHOSEN THESE PEOPLE. There are two reasons given: the first is the immediate reason, the second is the ultimate reason.

The first, or *immediate reason*, is contained in these words: "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are."

Observe, then, the *immediate reason* is, first *to confound the wise.* For one wise man to confound another wise man is remarkable; for a wise man to confound a foolish man is very easy; but for a foolish man to confound a wise man, ah! this is the finger of God. You know how it was with the first apostles. A philosopher listened to Paul, and when he had heard it he said: "There is nothing in it! perfect foolishness! pack of stuff from beginning to end! No need for us to take the trouble to answer it." Years rolled on, and when the philosopher was getting very gray, that pestilent heresy of Christianity was spreading everywhere; his own daughter was converted; even his wife used to steal out of a night to the secret assembly. The philosopher could not make it out. "There," he said, "I proved to a demonstration that it was all stupidity, and yet these people stick to it. I answered all their arguments, did I not? I not only answered and confuted, but I clinched my arguments in such a way that I thought I had put an end to the folly altogether. Here I

see it in my own household." Sometimes the philosopher had to stand, with tears in his eyes, and say: "I feel it in my own heart it has beaten me, it has confounded me; I could syllogize and rationalize, and beat poor Paul, but Paul has beaten me. What I thought was folly has confounded my wisdom." Within a few centuries after the death of Christ, the Christian religion had spread over the civilized world, while Paganism, which had all the philosophy of the east and of the west to back it up, had fallen into disrepute and was laughed to scorn.

Again, God has chosen the weak things *to confound the mighty.* "Oh!" said Cæsar, "we will soon root up this Christianity; — off with their heads!" The different governors hastened one after another of the disciples to death, but the more they persecuted them the more they multiplied. The pro-consuls had orders to destroy Christians; the more they hunted them the more Christians there were, until at last men pressed to the judgment-seat and asked to be permitted to die for Christ. They invented torments; they dragged the saints at the heels of wild horses; they laid them upon red-hot gridirons; thy pulled off the skin from their flesh piece by piece; they were sawn asunder; they were wrapped up in skins and daubed with pitch, and set in Nero's gardens at night to burn; they were left to rot in dungeons; they were made a spectacle to all men in the amphitheatre; the bears hugged them to death, the lions tore them to pieces, the wild bulls tossed them upon their horns — and yet Christianity spread. All the swords of the legionaries which had put to rout the armies of all nations, and had overcome the invincible Gaul and the savage Briton, could not withstand the feebleness of Christianity; for the weakness of God is mightier than men. If God had chosen the mighty men, they would have turned round and said, "God is beholden to us;" if he had chosen the wise, they would have said, "Our wisdom has done it;" but when he chooses the foolish and weak, where art thou now, philosopher? Hath not God laughed thee to scorn? Where are ye now, O sword and spear? O mighty man who wieldeth them, where art thou? God's weakness hath routed thee.

It is said that he chose the things that are not *to bring to naught the things that are.* This is even more than confounding them, to bring them to naught. "The things that are." What were they in the apostle's days? Jupiter, seated upon his lofty throne, holds the thunderbolt in his hand; Saturn reclined as the father of gods; Venus delighted her votaries with her lustful pleasures; the chaste Diana sounded her horn. Here comes Paul with "There is no God but God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent;" he represents "the things that are not." So contemptible is the heresy of Christianity, that, if a list were made out of the religions of different countries, Christianity would have been left out of the catalogue. But see the result! Where is Jupiter now? where Saturn? where Venus and Diana? Except as classic names in the dictionaries of the learned, where are they? Who bows before the shrine of Ceres in the day of harvest, or who lifts up his prayers to Neptune in the hour of storm? Ah! they have gone; the things that are have been brought to naught by the things that are not.

Let us reflect that what is true in Paul's day is true to-day. One thousand eight hundred and sixty-four shall see repeated the miracles of the olden times; the things that are shall be brought to naught by the things that are not. See in Wiclif's time: the things that are were the holy roods in every church; St. Winifred, St. Thomas of Canterbury are worshipped by all the multitudes of Englishmen. There comes my lord Archbishop through the street; yonder is the Pope worshipped by thousands, and there is the Virgin adored of all. What do I see? A solitary monk at Lutterworth begins to preach against the begging friars; and in preaching against them he finds out the truth, and begins to preach that Christ is the only ground of salvation, and that they who trust in him are saved. Well, it was such a contemptible thing, that at first they did not care to persecute him. It is true, at last he was brought up before his grace at St. Paul's; but there was a strong man, one John o' Gaunt, who came up with him, and said a word or two in his rough way, and Wiclif was allowed to sit down; and though condemned, he returns

to his parish of Lutterworth. "The thing that was not!" it was not worthy to be put down by blood; it would die out of itself. Did it die out? Where are your holy roods to-day? Where is St. Thomas of Canterbury? Where are St. Agnes and St. Winifred? Ask our Puseyite friends, for they alone can tell you. True consorts of the moles and of the bats, they know where the idols have been cast: they seek to restore the superstitions of the past, but by God's grace their task shall be no easy one.

The present system of English superstition, with its water regeneration, its baptismal grace, its confirmations, and its giving of grace through bread and wine, though it be attacked by those who are things that are not, shall yet cease to be; and the truth as it is in Jesus, and the pure simple faith that no man is a priest distinctively above his fellows, but that every Christian is a priest unto God; and the pure truth that no water can necessarily bring the Spirit of God with it, and that no outward forms and rites have any virtue in them apart from the faith of those who do receive them; these yet, backed by the Spirit of God, shall bring to naught the things that are. Herein we fall back upon the strength of God. I would not have God's champions stronger. Brethren, were they stronger they would take glory to themselves. Let them be weak, and let them be few, and let them be despised; their fewness, their poverty, their weakness, shall make the shout of praise unto the eternal Conqueror yet more loud, and the music shall be undivided; there shall only be this refrain, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory for thy truth's sake."

This, then, is God's immediate object in choosing foolish things, weak things, things that are not, to confound the mighty. But his *ultimate reason is*, "*that no flesh may glory in his presence.*" I want you to notice that last sentence, and I have done. He does not say "that no man;" no, the text is in no humor to please anybody; it says, "that no *flesh*." What a word! what a word, I say! Here are Solon and Socrates, the wise men. God points at them with his finger, and calls them "flesh." It

is sold in the shambles, is it not? Dogs tear it, worms eat it, — nothing but flesh. There is Cæsar, with his imperial purple cast about him; and as he stands erect, the mighty Imperator, how the Prætorian guards unsheath their swords and shout, "Great is the Emperor! long may he live!" "*Flesh*," saith God's Word — "*flesh*." Here they come tramping on, hundreds in a line, the strong legionaries of Rome, — who can stand against the bosses of their bucklers? "Flesh," saith the word — "flesh." Here are men whose sires were of royal lineage and grandsires of imperial rank, and they can trace back the long line of honor. "Flesh," says God, "flesh — nothing but flesh;" dogs' meat, worms' meat, when God wills it. "That no flesh may glory in his presence." Do you see, then, God puts this stamp upon us all that we are nothing but flesh; and he chooses the poorest flesh, and the most foolish flesh, and the weakest flesh, that all the other flesh that is only flesh and only grass may see that God pours contempt on it, and will have no flesh glory in his presence.

Now, what is your spirit this morning towards this subject? Do you kick at it? Do you say you cannot bear it? I am afraid you want to glory in God's presence. Your views of things and God's views of things differ, and therefore you need to have a new heart and a right spirit.

But, on the contrary, do you say this morning, "I have nothing to boast of; I would not glory in thy presence, but I would lie in the very dust and say, 'Do with me as thou wilt.'" Sinner, do you feel that you are nothing but flesh, and sinful flesh? Are ye so broken before God that you feel, let him do as he will with you, he will be just, and you can only appeal to his sovereign mercy? Then God and you are one; you are reconciled. I can see that you are reconciled. When God and you are agreed that God should reign, then God is agreed that you should live. Sinner, touch the sceptre of his grace. Jesus crucified stands before you now, and bids you look to him and live. That you are bidden to look is an instance of mighty grace, and that you are enabled to look this morning will be a wonder of divine love

for which you will have to bless him in time and eternity. And now, may that God whose name we have sought to honor this morning, bless these stammering words of ours for Jesus' sake. Amen.

SERMON XVII.

WHAT GOD CANNOT DO.

"GOD, THAT CANNOT LIE." — Titus i. 2.

TRUTH once reigned supreme upon our globe, and then earth was Paradise. Man knew no sorrow while he was ignorant of falsehood. The Father of Lies invaded the garden of bliss, and with one foul lie he blighted Eden into a wilderness, and made man a traitor to his God. Cunningly he handled the glittering falsehood, and made it dazzle in the woman's eyes — "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Proud ambition rode upon that lie as a conqueror in his chariot, and the city of Mansoul opened its gates to welcome the fascinating enemy. As it was a lie which first subjugated the world to Satan's influences, so it is by lies that he secures his throne. Among the heathen his kingdom is quiet and secure, because the minds of the people are deluded with a false mythology. The domains of Mahomet and the Pope are equally the kingdom of Satan, and his reign is undisturbed; for human merit, priestly efficacy, and a thousand other deceptions buttress his throne. The darkness of ignorance, the dungeons of falsehood, and the chains of superstition, are the main reliance of that monster who oppresses all the nations with his infernal tyranny.

Since by the lie Satan now holds the world and maintains his power, he everywhere encourages lies, and aids their propagation. Look about you, and see what a prolific family falsehood has! The children of the untrue are as many as the frogs of

Egypt, and, like those plagues, they intrude into every chamber. The slime of falsehood may be seen upon most things, both in secular and religious life. You have lying news and garbled reports in print; and as for the flying gossip of the tongue, if it touches the characters of good men, beware of believing a word it utters. If you would not have complicity with those who make the lie, be not hasty to entertain it. From the high places of the earth falsehood is not excluded. The untruth glides right royally from the kingly tongue, but is as much a lie as if the ragged mendicant had blurted it forth with low-lived oaths and curses. What is diplomacy, for the most part? Is it not "the art of lying?" Was not he thought to be the best politician who used language to conceal his thoughts? In how many a conference have the plenipotentiaries labored which could overreach, dissimulate, and intrigue to the greatest degree? In the commerce of courts, who knows not that flatteries and lies are the most abundant commodities? The art of king-craft, as practised by the most high and mighty Prince James, whose name dishonors our English Bible, was only and simply the science of lying in the neatest possible manner. In these modern times, the difference between the promises at the hustings and the performances in the House of Commons, proves that the lie is still commonly patronized. Falsehood is everywhere. It is entertained both by the lowest and the highest; it permeates all society; it has ruined the whole of our race, and so defiled the entire world, that upright men exclaim, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" In the so-called religious world, which should be as the holy of holies, here, too, the lie has insinuated itself. Of old there were prophets who prophesied lies, and dreamers of false dreams; and there were others who spoke the word of God with such bated breath, and after such a fashion, that it was no longer the truth as it came from God, but truth alloyed with human falsehood. It is so to-day. There are those wearing the vestments of God's priests who do not hesitate to profess what they do not believe. Such men are the priests of hell. To wear a bishop's mitre, and

teach infidelity — how shall I stigmatize it? — it is nothing less than detestable hypocrisy and robbery. And what shall I say of men of all creeds, all subscribing to the same articles and catechism, when all the world knows they cannot all honestly believe the same thing, and yet differ as much from one another as light from darkness? What shall I say but that shame covers my face that there should be so many ministers of God who are untrue to their convictions, and continue to do and say what they feel to be unscriptural? In other quarters, philosophy is believed and Christianity professed; the traditions of men are put in the place of God's truth. The prophets prophesy lies, and the people love to have it so. Brethren, we have everywhere to battle with falsehood; and if we are to bless the world, we must confront it with sturdy face and zealous spirit. *God's* purpose is to drive the lie out of the world, and be this *your* purpose and mine. His Holy Spirit has undertaken to drive falsehood out of our hearts; be this our determination, in his strength, that it shall be cut up root and branch, and utterly consumed. Then let us walk in the truth; "buy the truth, and sell it not;" hold fast the truth, speak the truth in love, and act the truth in all our deeds; for so shall we be known to be the children of that God of whom our text asserts that he is "God, that cannot lie." After wandering over the sandy desert of deceit, how pleasant is it to reach our text, and feel that one spot at least is verdant with eternal truth! Blessed be thou, O God, for thou canst not lie.

We will use our text in the following manner this morning: First, while we do not attempt to prove it, *we will remind you of a few things which may confirm your confidence that God cannot lie*, so that our opening remarks shall be *upon the truth of the text;* then, secondly, we will speak upon *the breadth of the text*, endeavoring to show that we must give no narrow interpretation to the words before us, but must receive them with an extent of meaning not usual to the expression; and then, thirdly, *we will try to use the text for our own improvement*, arguing from it that if God cannot lie he ought to receive our loving confidence.

I. First, then, let us commune together awhile concerning THE TRUTH OF THE TEXT, — not, as we have said, to prove it, because we all believe it, but to confirm our confidence thereon

Methinks we shall feel assured that God cannot lie when we remember that *he is not subject to those infirmities which lead us into falsehood.* Lord Bacon has said: "There are three parts in truth: first, the inquiry, which is the wooing of it; secondly, the knowledge of it, which is the presence of it; and, thirdly, the belief, which is the enjoyment of it." In each of these three points, by reason of infirmity, men fail to be perfectly true. In *the search* after truth, our moral eye is not altogether clear, and therefore we fail to see what we love not; we do not follow truth in a straight line, but are very liable to turn aside to the right hand or to the left, either to obey our prejudices or advance our profit. "Truth lies in a well," said the old philosopher. Many go down into that well to find truth, but, looking into the water, they see their own faces, and become so desperately enamored of their own beauty that they forget poor truth, or dream that she is the counterpart of themselves. Now, the great God cannot be liable to this error, because there is no discovery of truth with him. He needeth not to search anything out, for "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." When, in Scripture, that term is sometimes used, — "Shall not God search this out?" when we hear him spoken of as "searching the heart and trying the reins of the children of men,"— it is not because he is not perfectly acquainted with all things, but only to set forth the certainty and accuracy of divine knowledge. God having no need to search, or, if he had, having nothing in him which should lead him to make a dishonest search, therefore he doth not lie. When we have searched out the truth, there is *the knowing of* it; and here the falsehood gets a footing in the form of a sin of omission, for we often refuse to know all that we might know. It would be inconvenient, perhaps, for us to be too well acquainted with certain arguments, for then our prejudices must be given up, and therefore we close our eyes to them for fear of knowing the truth. Do not many

men leave passages of Scripture altogether unread because they have no wish to receive the doctrines which are taught therein? Every time you refuse to give a hearing to God's truth, you do in effect lie; because you prefer not to know the truth, which is really to prefer to hold error. Now, nothing of this kind can ever happen with our only wise God. He knows all truth, seeing it all at a glance, and retaining it ever in his mind. In nothing is he ignorant, either wilfully or otherwise. He receives truth as his own beloved, and when the world casts her out, she finds a happy shelter beneath his shield. We are quite clear that we frequently fall into the lie through a defect *in our believing*, for we sometimes know more than we care to believe. Truth is grasped by the understanding, but thrust out by the affections. We know her as Peter knew his Lord, and yet deny it after the same fashion as that disciple did his Master. Moreover, through weakness, we are led to doubt what we know to be God's truth, and even to speak unadvisedly with our lips. Now, this can never occur with God, since God is one, and is not to be divided into parts and passions, and his tongue can never be diverse from his heart. God's tongue is his heart, and God's heart is his hand. God is one. You and I are such that we can know in the heart, and yet with the tongue deny; but God is one and indivisible; God is light, and in him is no darkness at all; with him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Then, again, *the scriptural idea of God forbids that he should lie.* Just review your thoughts about God, if you can. What idea have you formed of him? If you have read Holy Scripture, and have gotten the slightest shadow of an idea of God, I think you will see that it is utterly inconsistent with the thrice Holy One, whose kingdom is over all, that he should lie. Admit the very possibility of his speaking an untruth, and to the Christian there would be no God at all. The depraved mind of the heathen may imagine a monster to be a god who can live in adultery, and in theft, and in lying, — for such the gods of the Hindoos are described as being, — but the enlightened mind of the Christian can conceive no such thing. The very word

"God" comprehendeth everything which is good and great. Admit the lie, and to us at once there would be nothing but the black darkness of Atheism forever. I could neither love, worship, nor obey a lying God.

Again: *we all know that God is too wise to lie.* Falsehood is the expedient of a fool. It is only a short-sighted man who lies. For some present advantage, the poor creature, who cannot see the end as well as the beginning, states that which is not; but no wise man who can look far into the future ever thinks a lie to be profitable: he knows that truth may suffer loss at first, but that in the long run she is always successful. He endorses that worldly-wise proverb, that "Honesty is the best policy" after all; and the man, I say, who has anything like foresight, or judgment, or wisdom, prefers always the straight line to the curve, and goes directly to the mark, believing that this is in the end the best. Do you suppose that God, who must know this with an intensity of knowledge infinitely greater than ours, will choose the policy of the witless knave? Shall God, only wise, who seeth the end from the beginning, act as only brainless fools will choose to behave themselves? Oh! it cannot be, my brethren. God, the all-wise, must also be all-true.

And the lie, again, *is the method of the little and the mean.* You know that a great man does not lie; a good man can never be false. Put goodness and greatness together, and a lie is altogether incongruous to the character. Now, God is too great to need the lie, and too good to wish to do such a thing; both his greatness and his goodness repel the thought.

My dear friends, *what motive could God have for lying?* When a man lies, it is that he may gain something; but "the cattle on a thousand hills" are God's, and all the beasts of the forest, and all the flocks of the meadows. He says, "If I were hungry I would not tell thee." Mines of inexhaustible riches are his, and treasures of infinite power and wisdom. He cannot gain aught by untruth, for "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;" wherefore, then, should he lie? Men are false ofttimes to win applause. See how the sycophant cringes

to the tyrant's foot, and spawns his villanies! But God needs no honor and no fame, especially from the wicked. To him it were the greatest disgust of his righteous soul to be loved by unholy creatures. His glory is great enough, even if there were no creatures; his own self-contained glory is such that if there were no eye to see it, and no ear to hear it, he would be infinitely glorious. He asketh nothing — no respect and no honor of man, and therefore hath he no need to stoop to the lie to gain it. And of whom, again, could he be afraid? Men will sometimes, under the impulse of fear, keep back or even contradict the truth, but can fear ever enter into the heart of the eternal God? He looketh down upon all nations who are in rebellion against him, and he doth not even care to rise to put them down. "He that *sitteth* in the heavens shall *laugh:* the Lord shall have them in derision!" Are not the chariots of the Lord twenty thousand, even thousands of angels? Even these are but as a drop of a bucket, when compared with the deep and infinite sea of his own power. Who, then, shall think that Jehovah needs to be afraid? "Fear" and "Jehovah" are two words which cannot meet together. Therefore, since there can be no motive whatever which should possibly lead God to lie, we feel well assured that the declaration of Paul is most certainly true — "God, that cannot lie."

Moreover, dear friends, we may add to all this *the experience of men with regard to God.* It has been evident enough in all ages that God cannot lie. He did not lie when Adam fell. It seemed a strange thing that, after all the skill and labor which had been spent in making such a world as this, so fair and beautiful, God should resign it to the dominion of Satan, and drive the man whom he had made in his own image out of his home, his Eden, to labor in sweat and toil and suffering, until he came to his grave. But God did it, and the fiery sword at the gate of Eden was proof that God could not and would not lie. He might come to Adam, and bemoan himself, crying, "Adam, where art thou?" as if he pitied him, and would, if it had been possible, have spared the stroke; but still it must be done, and Eden is

blasted, and Adam becomes a wanderer upon the fruitless earth. Then, afterwards, — to quote a notable instance of God's faithfulness, — when the flood swept away the race of men, and Noah came forth the heritor of a new covenant, we have clear proof that God cannot lie. No flood has ever destroyed the earth since then. Partial floods there have been, and parts of provinces have been inundated; but no flood has ever come upon the earth of such a character as that which Noah saw: hence the rainbow, every time it is painted upon the cloud, is an assurance to us that God cannot lie. Then he made an oath with Abraham that he should have a son, and that his seed should become possessors of all the land in which the patriarch had sojourned. Did not that come true? They waited in Egypt two hundred years; they smarted under the tyrant's lash; they lay among the pots; and yet, after all, with a high hand and with an outstretched arm he brought forth his people, led them through the wilderness, and divided Canaan by lot to them, having driven out the inhabitants of the land before them. Since that time he made his covenant with David; and how fast has that stood! All the threatenings which he has uttered against the enemies of Israel, how surely have they been fulfilled! Last of all, and best of all, when the fulness of time was come, did not God send forth his own Son, born of a woman, made under the law? Did he not, according to his ancient promise, lay upon him the iniquity of us all? Were not the incarnation and death of our Lord Jesus the grandest proof of the truthfulness of God which could be afforded? His own Son must leave heaven emptied of its glory, must be given up to be despised and rejected of men, must be nailed to the accursed wood, and be forsaken in the hour of his bitterest grief: herein is truth indeed. I say, if this *must be* according to the promise, and if this *was* according to the fact, then we have the clearest and the surest evidence that God cannot by any possibility be false to his own word. Rightly hath he earned the title which his nature claims, "God, that cannot lie." May I not add, as another argument, that *you have found him true?* You have been to him, dear friends, in many

times of trial; you have taken his promise and laid it before his mercy-seat: what say you, has he ever broken his promise? You have been through the floods — did he leave you? You have passed through the fires — were you burned? You have cried to him in trouble — did he fail to deliver you? O ye poor and needy ones, ye have been brought very low, but has he not been your helper? You have passed hard by the gates of the grave, and hell has opened its horrid jaws to swallow you up, but are you not to-day the living monuments of the fidelity of God to his promise, and the veracity of every word of the Most High God? Let these things, then, refresh your memories, that you may the more confidently know that he is "God, that cannot lie."

II. Let us pass on to look at THE BREADTH OF MEANING IN THE TEXT.

When we are told in Scripture that God cannot lie, there is usually associated with the idea the thought of *immutability.* As, for instance: "He is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." The word "lie" here includes, beyond its ordinary meaning, the thought of change; so that when we read that God cannot lie, we understand by it, not only that he cannot say what is untrue, but that, having said something which is true, *he never changes* from it, and does not by any possibility alter his purpose or retract his word. This is very consolatory to the Christian, that whatever God has said in the divine purpose is never changed. The decrees of God were not written upon sand, but upon the eternal brass of his unchangeable nature. We may truly say of the sealed book of the decrees, "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? hath he purposed, and shall it not come to pass?" We read in Scripture of several instances where God apparently changed; but I think the observation of the old Puritan explains all these. He says, "God may will a change, but he cannot change his will." Those changes of operation which we sometimes read of in Scripture did not involve any change in the divine purpose. God, for

instance, sent to warn Hezekiah that according to the common course of nature he must die, and yet afterwards fifteen years were added to his life, God's purpose having been all along that Hezekiah should live till the end of the fifteen years; but still his purpose equally included that he should be brought so near to the gates of death, that in the ordinary course of nature he must die; and then that the miracle should come in as still in part of the purpose, that Hezekiah might be cured in a supernatural manner, and be made to live nearer to his God in consequence. God wills a change, but he never changes his will; and when the last great day shall come, you and I shall see how everything happened according to that hidden roll wherein God had written with his own wise finger every thought which man should think, every word which he should utter, and every deed which he should do. Just as it was in the book of decree, so shall it transpire in the roll of human history.

God never changes, then, as to his purpose; and here is our comfort. If he has determined to save us, — and we know he has, for all who believe in him are his elect, — then we shall be saved. Heaven shall never by any possibility be defeated by hell. Hell and earth may combine together to destroy a soul which rests upon Christ, but while God's decree standeth fast and firm, that chosen soul is safe; and since that decree never can be removed, let us take confidence and rejoice. No promise has ever been altered, and no threatening either. Still is his promise sure. "I have not said unto the seed of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain." No new decrees have been passed, repealing the past. We can never say of God's Book, as we can of old law-books, that such and such an act is obsolete. There is no obsolete statute in God's Book. There stand promises, as fresh, as new, as vigorous, and as forceful to-day, as when they first dropped from the mouth of God. The words, then, "God, that cannot lie," include the very gracious and precious doctrine that he cannot by any possibility change.

But we must not, while talking in this manner, forget the primary meaning, that he cannot *be false* in his thoughts, words,

or actions. There is no shadow of a lie upon anything which God thinks, or speaks, or does. He cannot lie in his *prophecies.* How solemnly true have they been! Ask the wastes of Nineveh; turn to the mounds of Babylon; let the traveller speak concerning Idumea and Petra; turn even to the rock of Sidon, and to thy land, O Immanuel. We may boldly ask the traveller, "Hath he said, and hath he not done it? Have his words fallen to the ground? Has God's curse been an idle word?" No, not in one single case. All the words of the Lord are sure. The prophecies will be as true as they have been, and the Book of Revelation, though we may not comprehend it to-day, will doubtless be fulfilled in every stroke and in every line, and we shall marvel how it was that we did not know its meaning; but at present it is enough for us to know its truth — its meaning shall only be learned as the events explain the prophecy.

As God is true in his prophecies, so is he faithful to his *promises.* Have you and I, dear friends, a confidence in these? If so, let us try them this morning. Sinner, weeping and bemoaning thyself, God will forgive thee thy sin if thou believest in Jesus. If thou wilt confess that he is faithful and just to forgive then, he hath promised so to do, and he cannot lie. Christian, if you have a promise to-day laid upon your heart, if you have been pleading it, perhaps for months, and it has not been fulfilled, I pray you gather fresh courage this morning, and again renew thy wrestling. Go and say, "Lord, I know thou canst not lie, therefore fulfil thy word unto thy servant." If the promises of God were not kept, God would lie; they must therefore be fulfilled: and let us believe that they will be, and go to God, not with a wavering spirit, which half hopes that the word may be true, but with the full assurance that they cannot fail. As certainly as we know that day and night shall not cease, and that summer will not fail, so surely let us be convinced that every word of the Lord shall stand.

His *threatenings* are true also. Ah, sinner! thou mayst go on in thy ways for many a day, but thy sin shall find thee out at the last. Seventy years God's long-suffering may wait over thee,

but when thou shalt come into another world thou shalt find every terrible word of Scripture fulfilled; thou shalt then know that there is a place "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;" thou shalt then experience the "wailing and gnashing of teeth," except thou repentest. If thou wilt believe in Jesus, thou shalt find the promise true; but if thou wilt not, equally sure shall be the threatening. This is a dreadful part of the subject to those who are out of Christ — who have never been partakers of the Holy Ghost. It will be in vain for you to cry to him then, and ask him then to change his mind. No; though you should weep oceans of tears, hell's flames cannot be quenched, nor can your soul escape from the place to which it is finally doomed. To-day, while mercy is preached to you, lay hold upon it; but remember, if not, as God cannot lie, he cannot suffer you to escape, but you must feel the weight and terror of his arm.

We might thus go through everything which concerns God, from prophecy to promises and threatenings, and onwards, and multiply observations; but we choose to close this point by observing that *every word of instruction from God is most certainly true.* It is astounding how much sensation is caused in the Christian Church by the outbreak, every now and then, of fresh phases of infidelity. I do not think that these alarms are at all warranted. It is what we must expect to the very end of this dispensation. If all carnal minds believed the Bible, I think the spiritual might almost begin to doubt it; but as there are always some who will attack it, I shall feel none the less confidence in it. Really, the Book of God has stood so many attacks from such different quarters, that to be at all alarmed about it shows a very childish fear. When a rock has been standing all our lifetime, and has been known to stand firmly throughout all the ages of history, none but foolish people will think that the next wave will sweep it away. Within our own short life — say some five-and-twenty years' recollection — have we not remembered, I was about to say, almost as many as five-and-twenty shapes of infidelity? You know it must change about every twenty years at least, for

no system of infidelity can live longer than that. There was the witty system of objection which Voltaire introduced; and how short-lived was that! Then came the bullying, low-lived, blackguard system of Tom Paine; and how short-lived was its race! Then, in more modern times, unbelief took the shape of Secularism: what particular shapes it takes now we scarcely know — perhaps Colensoism is the most fashionable; but that is dying out, and something else will follow it. These creations of an hour just live their little day, and they are gone. But look at belief in Scripture, and at Scripture itself. The Bible is better understood, more prized, and I believe, on the whole, more practised, than ever it was since the day when its Author sent it abroad into the world. Its course is still onward; and after all which has been done against it, no visible effect has been produced upon the granite-wall of scriptural truth by all the pick-axes and boring-rods which have been broken upon it. Walking through our museums now-a-days, we smile at those who think that Scripture is not true. Every block of stone from Nineveh, every relic which has been brought from the Holy Land, speaks with a tongue which must be heard even by the deaf adder of Secularism, and which says, "Yes, the Bible is true, and the Word of God is no fiction." Beloved, we may rest assured that we have not a word in the Book of God which is untrue. There may be an interpolation or two of man's which ought to be revised and taken away; but the Book as it comes from God is truth, and nothing but truth; not only containing God's Word, but being God's Word; being not like a lump of gold inside a mass of quartz, but all gold, and nothing but gold; and being inspired to the highest degree, I will not say verbally inspired, but more than that, having a fulness more than that which the letter can convey; having in it a profundity of meaning such as words never had when used by any other being, — God having the power to speak a multitude of truths at once. And when he means to teach us one thing according to our capability of receiving it, he often teaches us twenty other things, which for the time we do not comprehend, but which by-and-by, as our senses are exer-

cised, reveal themselves by the Holy Spirit. Every time I open my Bible I will read it as the Word of "God, that cannot lie;" and when I get a promise or a threatening, I will either rejoice or tremble, because I know that these stand fast.

Dear friends, this leads us, in closing this point, to say that when we read that passage — "God, that cannot lie" — we understand that *his very nature cannot lie*, for he hates lies; wherever there is a lie God is its enemy. It was to overcome the lie of sin that God sent his Son to bleed, and every day the thoughts of God are centred upon the extermination of evil and the extension of his own truth. Nothing can set forth in words to us the hatred and detestation which God has in his heart of anything which is untrue. Oh that we knew and felt this, and would glow with the same anger, seeking to exterminate the false, slaying it in our own hearts, and giving it nothing to feed upon in our temper, our conversation, or our deeds!

III. But I shall now come to make a practical use of the text, in the third place, by observing HOW WE OUGHT TO ACT TOWARDS GOD IF IT BE TRUE THAT HE IS A "GOD THAT CANNOT LIE."

Brethren, if it be so that God cannot lie, then *it must be the natural duty of all his creatures to believe him.* I cannot resist that conclusion. It seems to me to be as clear as noonday, that it is every man's duty to believe truth, and that if God must speak and act truth, and truth only, it is the duty of all intelligent creatures to believe him. Here is "duty-faith," again, which some are railing at; but how they can get away from it, and yet believe that God cannot lie, I cannot understand. If it be not my duty to believe in God, then it is no sin for me to call God a liar. Will any one subscribe to that — that God is a liar? I think not; and if to think God to be a liar would be a most atrocious piece of blasphemy, then it can only be so on the ground that it is the natural and incumbent duty of every creature understanding the truthfulness of God to believe in God. If God has set forth the Lord Jesus Christ as the propitiation for sin, and

has told me to t ust Christ, it is my duty to trust Christ, because God cannot lie; and though my sinful heart will never believe in Christ as a matter of duty, but only through the work of the Holy Spirit, yet faith does not cease to be a duty; and whenever I am unbelieving, and have doubts concerning God, however moral my outward life may be, I am living in daily sin; I am perpetrating a sin against the first principles of morality. If I doubt God, as far as I am able I rob him of his honor, and stab him in the vital point of his glory; I am, in fact, living an open traitor and a sworn rebel against God, upon whom I heap the daily insult of daring to doubt him. O my hearers! there are some of you who do not believe in Christ; I wish you would ook at your character and position in this light. You are not trusting in Christ for your salvation. Remember, "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar." Those are John's own inspired words, and you are, every day that you are not a believer in Christ, virtually writing upon your door-post, and saying with your mouth, "God is a liar; Christ is not able to save me: I will not trust him; I do not believe God's promise; I do not think he is sincere in his invitation to me to come to Christ; I do not believe what God says." Remember that you are living in such a state as this; and may God the Holy Ghost impress you with a sense of the sin of that state; and, feeling this your sin and misery, I pray God to lead you to cry, "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief." This, then, is our first practical conclusion from the fact that God cannot lie.

Other thoughts suggest themselves. *If we were absolutely sure that there lived on earth a person who could not lie, how would you treat him?* You know there cannot be such a man. There may be a man who *will not* lie, but there cannot be a man of whom it may be said that he *cannot* lie; for, alas! we have all the power of evil in us, and we can lie, and to a certain degree it is quite true that "all men are liars." But if you could be certain that there was a man out of whose heart the black drop had been wrung, and that he could not lie, how would you act towards him? Well, I think *you would cultivate his acquaint-*

ance. If you be true yourselves, you would desire his friendship. You would say, "He is the friend for me; I have trusted in such and such a man, and he has played the Judas; I asked counsel of another, and he was an Ahithophel; but if this man cannot lie, he shall be my bosom companion, if he will accept me; and he shall be my counsellor, if he will but have the goodness to direct me." I should expect to see a *lévee* of all the good in the world waiting at the man's door. You know how the world, with all its sinfulness, does reverence the man who is true. We had an instance in our streets the other day, of the good man and the true, who received homage of all, and yet that man *could* lie; but inasmuch as we never have seen *that he did*, but his life has been straightforward, therefore we have paid him honor, and deservedly so. Well, now, if such be the case, should not all Christians seek more and more the friendship of God? "O Lord, be thou my familiar friend, my counsellor, my guide; if thou canst not lie I will lay bare my heart to thee; I will tell thee all my secrets, I will trust thee with all the desires of my heart: I know thou canst never betray me, or be unfaithful; let there be a union established betwixt my soul and thine, and let it be broken never." Let communion with God be the desires of your hearts on the ground that he cannot lie.

If we knew a man who could not lie, *we should believe him, methinks, without an oath.* I cannot suppose that when *he* came into the court of justice they would pass *him* the Bible; no, his word would be better than the oath of ordinary men, if he could not lie. You would not want any sign or evidence to prove what he said; you would take his word at once. So should it be with God. Ah, dear freinds! God has given us more than his word; he has given us his oath; and yet, strange is it that we, who profess to be his children, are vile enough to distrust our own Father; and sometimes, if he does not give us signs and evidences, we begin to distrust him; so that, after all, I am afraid we rather trust the signs than trust God, and put more confidence in frames and evidences than we do in the naked promise; which is an atrocious sin indeed. Many believers cannot be comfortable

without signs and evidences. When they feel in a good frame of mind — ah! then God's promise is true. When they can pray heartily, when they can feel the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, then they say, "How God has kept his promise!" Ah! but, my brother, that is a seeing-faith: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Faith is to believe in God when my heart is as hard as the nether millstone, when my frames are bad, when I cannot pray, when I cannot sing, when I can do nothing good. To say, "He has promised and will perform; he has said that whosoever believeth in Christ is not condemned; I do believe in Christ, and therefore I am not condemned," — this is genuine faith.

Again: if we knew a man who could not lie, *we should believe him in the teeth of fifty witnesses the other way.* Why, we should say, "They may say what they will, but they *can* lie." You might have good evidence that they were honest men usually, but you would say, "They *can* lie; they have the power of lying; but here is a man who stands alone, and cannot lie; then his word must be true." This shows us, beloved, that we ought to believe God in the teeth of every contradiction. Even if outward providence should come to you, and say that God has forsaken you, that is only one; and even if another, and another, and another should come, and fifty trials should all say that God has forsaken you, yet, as God says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," which will you take — the one promise of God who cannot lie, or the fifty outward providences which you cannot interpret? I know what the devil has been whispering in your ear:

> "The Lord hath forsaken thee quite,
> Thy God will be gracious no more."

But then, recollect who hath said, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God." Which will you believe — the devil's insinuation, or God's own testimony? My dear sister, you have been praying for a certain thing for years; you pray, you pray, and you pray again, and now discouragement arises; unbelief says, "God will not hear that prayer; that prayer

of yours does not come up before the throne of God, and there will be no answer." But the Lord has said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Which will you believe — your unbelief, the long months of weariness, and the anxieties which prompted you to discouragement, or will you believe in the naked promise? Why, if God cannot lie, let us give him what we would give to a man if he were of the same character — our full confidence, even in the teeth of contradiction; for he is "God, that cannot lie."

If a man were introduced to us, and we were certain that he could not lie, *we should believe everything he said, however incredible it might appear to us at first sight to be.* I shall have an appeal to every soul here present. It does seem very incredible at first sight that God should take a sinner, full of sin, and forgive all his iniquities in one moment, simply and only upon the ground of the sinner believing in Christ. I recollect the time when it seemed to me utterly impossible that I could ever have my sins forgiven. I had a clear sense of the value of pardon, and this thought would be always ringing in my ears: "It is too good to be true that *you* should be pardoned; that *you*, an enemy, should be made into a child; that *you*, who have gone on sinning against light and against knowledge, should yet rejoice in union to Christ; the thing is too good to be true." But, beloved friends, supposing it should seem too good to be true, yet, since you have it upon the testimony of one who "cannot lie," I pray you believe it. "*But, sir,* —" No, none of your "buts;" he cannot lie. "*Ah! but,* —" Away with your "ahs" or your "buts," for Jehovah cannot lie. He has said it: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." To believe is to trust Christ. If, therefore, you are trusting Christ, you must be saved; and whatever you may be, or whatever you may have done, if you will now trust Jesus Christ, you have God's Word for it — and he cannot lie — that you shall be saved. Come, now, will you kick against the promise because of its greatness? Do not so, but let your doubts and fears be hushed to sleep; and

now, with the promise of God as your pillow, and God's faithfulness as your support, lie down in peace, and behold in faith's open vision the ladder, the top whereof leads to heaven. Trust the promise of God in Christ, and depend upon it that he will be as good to you, even to you, as his own Word, and in heaven you shall have to sing of the "God that cannot lie."

I would that these weak words of mine — for I am very conscious of their feebleness this morning — may nevertheless have comfort in them for any who have been doubting and fearing, that they may trust my Lord; and sure I am that if they begin a life of faith, they will begin a life of happiness and of security. "The just shall live by faith," and well may they do so when they have to trust in a "God that cannot lie."

SERMON XVIII.

LABOR IN VAIN.

"JONAH SAID UNTO THEM, TAKE ME UP, AND CAST ME FORTH INTO THE SEA; SO SHALL THE SEA BE CALM UNTO YOU: FOR I KNOW THAT FOR MY SAKE THIS GREAT TEMPEST IS UPON YOU. NEVERTHELESS THE MEN ROWED HARD TO BRING IT TO THE LAND; BUT THEY COULD NOT, FOR THE SEA WROUGHT, AND WAS TEMPESTUOUS AGAINST THEM." — Jonah i. 12, 13.

THESE mariners manifested most commendable humanity. They were not willing, even though it were to preserve their own lives, to cast overboard an innocent man; therefore they first used their best endeavors; and when these failed, they made a solemn appeal to God, entreating him not to lay upon them innocent blood: and then, since necessity hath no law, Jonah, as a last resource, was given up to the boisterous element, but not till every effort had been made to save him. We should be very careful of human life, doing nothing which even indirectly may destroy or injure it. And if we should be jealous over life, how much more anxious should we be concerning men's souls! and how watchful lest we should do anything by which the least of the human family may have his eternal interests endangered by our example or teaching! God give us, like these mariners, to row hard, that if possible we may bring the ship to land; laboring that none around us may be left to perish. I shall not, however, dwell upon that aspect of the text. Our Saviour selected Jonah as one of his peculiar types: "There shall no sign be given," said he, "to the men of this generation but the sign of the prophet Jonas." We believe, therefore, that we are

not erring if we translate the details of the history of Jonas into spiritual illustrations of man's experience and action with regard to Christ and his gospel.

We have before us a picture of what most men do before they will resort to God's remedy; that remedy is here most fairly imaged in the deliverance of the whole ship's company by the sacrifice of one on their behalf.

I. Our first observation is, that SINNERS, WHEN THEY ARE TOSSED UPON THE SEA OF CONVICTION, MAKE DESPERATE EFFORTS TO SAVE THEMSELVES.

The men rowed hard to bring the ship to land. The Hebrew is they "digged" hard, sending the oars deep into the water with much exertion and small success. The tempest so tossed the sea about that they could not row in good and orderly manner; but they desperately tugged at the oars, which the towering waves rendered useless by too deep a digging. Straining every sinew, they labored by violence to get the ship in safety to the haven. Brethren, no word in any language can express the violence of earnest action with which awakened sinners strive and struggle to obtain eternal life. Truly, if the kingdom of God were in the power of him that willeth and him that runneth, they would possess it at once. Since they struggle, however, in an unlawful manner, the crown of victory will never be awarded them; they may kindle the fire, and rejoice in the sparks thereof, but thus saith the Lord, "This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow."

Let us notice some forms of the fleshy energy of men straining after self-salvation. The most usual is, *moral reformation.* We have seen the drunkard, when conscience has been awakened, renounce his cups altogether; he has gone further than temperance, and has espoused total abstinence; and proceeding further still, it often happens that, in the excess of zeal, he vomits forth furious words against all who go not the same length of abstinence as himself. Yonder man was given up to blasphemy, but now an ill word never comes from his tongue; and he is there-

fore content with himself because he no longer curses God. Another has followed an ill trade, or has been in the habit of neglecting the Sabbath-day; conscience has mercifully led him to give up his ill connections and attend a place of worship. Is not this well? It is indeed well; but it is not enough. It is marvellous how far men will push their reforms, and yet how little solid peace such purgings can secure. For what is the sinner after his reformation but the blackamoor washed clean, a blackamoor still? I would have the Ethiopian clean, by all manner of means; but I would not let him fancy that the soap and the nitre will make him white. I would have the leopard tamed and caged, but this will not remove his spots. Moral reforms are excellent in themselves, but they are dangerous if we rest in them. Let even a corpse be washed, but let no man dream that the most careful washing will restore it to life. "*Ye must be born again*," rings out the death-knell of all salvation by human effort. Unless reforms are founded in regeneration, they are baseless things, which fail in the end for want of foundation; they are deceptive things, affording a transient hope, which soon, alas! must melt away. Ah, my hearer! thou mayst go on improving and reforming, but all thy present and future amendments can never wipe out the old score of sin. There stands the black catalogue of thy sins, engraved as in eternal brass; the gloomy record remains unaltered and unalterable by any deeds of thine. Something more potent than thy tears and change of life must take away the sins of thy departed years. Beware, then, of thinking that you are getting the ship to land, row as hard as you may with these oars of human resolution.

Others add to their reformation *a superstitious regard to the outward form of religion.* According to the sect with which they unite, they become excessively religious. They reverence every nail of the church door, and every panel of the pulpit; there is not a brick in the aisle which is not sacred to them, nor even a pantile on the roof. Every rubric, every "Amen," every vestment and candlestick, has to them a world of sanctity about it. They are not content with the ordinary days of worship, but the

church bell rings every morning; and well it may, for if men are to earn salvation in God's house, they had need be there all day and all night too. Even in a Protestant Church, men row very hard with multitudinous observances and superstitious performances; but when you get into the Romish Church, the *labor in vain* comes to a climax. What with vows of poverty, celibacy, silence, passive obedience, and a thousand other tortures, if the Moloch whom they worship be not satisfied, he ought to be. We heard but the other day of a gentleman giving up all his goodly heritage, selling his broad acres, and pouring all the purchase-money into the coffers of the monks and priests, in order that at last, by rowing hard in this way, he might get the ship to land. It is remarked of the Hindoos, that they give vastly more to their idols than we bestow upon the cause of God, and I suppose it is true: but then they also are rowing hard to get the ship to land. All they do is for themselves. Self is always a mighty power in the world. Do but teach men that they can gain their own salvation by their own doings and mortifications and offerings, and I would expect to see the treasury filled; I would expect to hear the whip constantly going upon the shoulders; but I should despair of seeing anything like holiness surviving in the land. Superstition is hard rowing; the ship will not come to the land thereby. Men invent ceremony after ceremony; there is this pomp and that show, this gaudy ornament and that procession; but the whole matter ends in outward display: no secret soul-blessing results flow therefrom. Priests and their votaries may go on piling up human inventions *ad infinitum*, but they will forever fail to ease the conscience, or give rest to a disturbed soul. Man's awful necessities crave something more than the husks of superstition.

You will find another form of the same thing among ourselves. Many persons row hard to get the ship to land by *a notional belief in orthodox doctrine*. This superstition is harder to deal with, but quite as dangerous as the belief in good works. It is quite as legal an idea for me to think to be accepted by believing good doctrine, as to expect to be pardoned for doing good

works. Yet we have scores of people who, if they can get hold of the Calvinistic creed at the right end; if they become masters of it, and know how to argue against Arminianism; if they become not only sound Calvinists, but a little sounder still, having not only the sixteen ounces to the pound, but two or three ounces over and above, so as to make them ultra-Calvinistic, — why then they fancy that all must be well. "I never can hear a preacher," this man will say, "who is not sound. I can tell at once when there is a grain of free will in the sermon." This is all very well; but he who boasts thus may be no better than the devil: nay, he may not be so good; for the devil believes *and trembles*, but these men believe and are too much hardened in their own conceit to think of trembling. Away with the idea that believing sound doctrine and chaining ourselves to a cast-iron creed is vital godliness and eternal life! Orthodox sinners will find that hell is hot, and that their knowledge of predestination will not yield a cooling drop to their parched tongues. Condemning other people, cutting off the saints of God right and left, is but poor virtue, and to have these blessed doctrines in the head while neglecting them in the heart is anything but a gracious sign. If ye can "a hair divide betwixt the west and north-west side," do not therefore fancy that your fine gifts and profound orthodoxy will ensure you an entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Ah! you may row with those oars, but you will not get the ship to land; ye must be saved by sovereign grace, through the operation of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, or you will not be saved at all. As it is not by doing that we are saved, neither is it by subscribing creeds; there is something more than this needed ere the ship reach the port.

Perhaps, in this congregation, we have other subtle methods of endeavoring to do the same thing, The pastor has noticed that many are resting upon their own *incessant prayers*. Ah, my poor hearer! thou knowest thy need of something, thou canst hardly tell what; thou hast heard the subject of salvation explained to thee a hundred times, and now, when it comes to the pinch, thou dost not understand it after all. I thank God that

thou hast learned how to pray; that thy sighs and cries and groans come up before him; but I sorrow because thou trustest in thy prayers, and resteth in them. Remember that thou wilt no more be saved for the sake of thy prayers than for the sake of thy good works. If thy knees become hard as the knees of St. James are said to have been, — hard, like the camel's, through long kneeling, — and if, with the Psalmist, thou couldst say, "My throat is dried, mine eyes fail," — yet all this, if thou lookest to it, and dost not look to Christ, will never avail thee. I knew what it was for months to cry out to God, and to find the heavens above me as brass, because I had not understood clearly the soul-quickening words, "Believe and live;" but dreamed that by praying I could get myself into a suitable state to receive mercy, or perhaps move the heart of God towards me; whereas that heart needed no moving towards me: it was full of love from before the foundation of the world. *Pray*, my dear brethren; let me never discourage you in that. But do let me beg you not to sit still, or recline upon your prayers; for if you get no further than your prayers, you will never get to heaven. There is more wanted than crying to God; more wanted than earnest desires, however passionately they may be breathed. There must be faith in Jesus, or else you will row hard with your prayers, and you will never bring the ship to land.

Then there are others who are toiling by — I scarcely know how to describe it — a sort of *mental torture*. Oh! the many who say, "If I could feel as I ought to feel! O, sir, my heart is as hard as a nether millstone; and yet I do not feel that it is hard — I wish I did. I would give my eyes if I could repent. I would give my right arm if I could but weep for sin. I would be satisfied to be a beggar, or to lie rotting in a dungeon, if I could but feel that I was fit to come to the Saviour; but, alas! I feel nothing. If I did but feel my unfitness, — did but know my own undesert, — I should have hope; but I am made of such hell-hardened steel that neither terrors or mercies can move me. Oh, that I could repent! Oh, that this rock could give forth streams like that rock which Moses smote in the wilderness of old! Oh,

that I could but bring my heart to melt into something like desires after God and Christ! Oh, I am everything but what I should be!" Now, my dear hearer, you will row very hard in this way before you will ever come to land; for self-righteousness lies at the bottom of all this. You want to save your heart from hardness, and then come to Jesus; which is as much as to say you wish to save yourself, and then come to him to put the finishing-stroke upon you. You have a secret attachment to your own goodness, or you would not be so eager to compass a fitness; otherwise you would at once do as you are bidden and rest alone on Jesus. Your business is not with self, but with Jesus; with Jesus, just as you are. However hard your heart may be, — however destitute of feeling you may have become, — this, though it should be subject for lamentation, should never keep you from resting in him who is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him. I tell you, your trying to get your heart into a right state, your trying to repent, your trying to be humble, is all labor in vain. It is all going the wrong way to work. Your business is with Christ; he can soften, cleanse, and sanctify; but you can do none of these, try as you will. Come as ye are to my Lord Jesus, hard heart and all, and the sea shall soon be calm to you; but while you row with your own oars, the sea will only work and be the more tempestuous.

Various are the shapes which this carnal energy assumes. I have met with many who are in this kind of case. They are constantly starting objections to their own salvation, and trying to answer them. They have comfort for a moment, and they say, "Yes, this is very sweet, *but* —;" and then they will spend a week or two in trying to split up that *but*. When they are rid of this *but*, a mercy will come to them from another quarter, and they are sure to meet it with, "Ah! blessed be God for that, *but* —" They are always pulling away at these *buts;* these big waves come sweeping up to the side of their vessel, and they try to dig their oars into them. Friend, if you are never saved until you, an unpardoned sinner, have answered all objections, you will never be saved; because there

are a thousand objections to the salvation of any man, which can only be met by one argument, and that is the blood of Jesus. If thou wilt go here and there seeking answers to the devil's suggestions of unbelief, thou mayst travel the whole round, and end thy fruitless task in despair. But if thou wilt come to Jesus, — if thou wilt see him like another Jonah thrown out of the ship for thy sake, — if thou wilt but see him lost that thou mayst be saved, — then a peace which passeth all understanding shall keep thy heart and mind by Christ Jesus.

II. We will now take the second point. Like these mariners, THE FLESHY EFFORTS OF AWAKENED SINNERS MUST INEVITABLY FAIL. The text says, "The men rowed hard to bring it to the land, *but they could not.*" With all man's rowing after mercy and salvation, he can never find it by his own efforts.

For this good reason, first of all, that *it is contrary to God's law for a sinner to get comfort by anything he can do for and by himself.* Here is the law: "By the works of the law there shall no flesh living be justified." That rule, then, fixed and fast as the laws of nature, shuts out forever all hope of the attainment of joy and peace by anything that we can do, or be, or feel; for all these the law already claims of us. How mad, then, will it be on our part if we run counter to a divine law! Success is impossible in so perverse a course. I do well, therefore, if I discourage all the efforts of awakened consciences to find peace anywhere except in the work of Christ. Let a man labor never so earnestly, yet if he goes against the laws of nature, you know his labor is lost. Here is an oven to be warmed, for hungry persons need bread. See the workers, yonder, how they toil, bringing snow with all their might to heat the oven. "Well," you say, "do not discourage them; do not discourage their earnest activity! It is a pity, when you see people really determined to do anything, to discourage their efforts!" Ah! it is a pity indeed, except when these efforts are foolish. If I see them bringing snow to heat an oven, I know they will never do it, work as hard as they may; and when sinners bring their own

works to yield them spiritual comfort, I know that they are spending their labor for that which profiteth not, and I must and will discourage them.

Some years ago certain persons engaged in a speculation to sink a coal-mine in a part of England where coal was never found. Prospectuses were issued, directors obtained, and shareholders duped, and the workmen began to sink their shaft. Now, it was absolutely certain — any geologist could have told them so — that they would not find coal, let them dig to doomsday. Suppose you and I had gone there and seen them digging, and had laughed at them, or told them it was all of no avail, wiseacres might have replied, "You ought not to discourage coal-mining; you ought not to discourage men who are working so very hard." I would say, "I would not discourage coal-mining in any place where there is coal to be had; but for these poor souls to throw away their sweat and their money for that which is not coal, I *will* discourage them in that insane enterprise, and think I do them good service." When we see men struggling after eternal life through their own efforts, we know eternal life is not to be had there. We are glad that they are awakened to anything like effort, for anything is better than spiritual sloth: but we are grieved to see them laboring in the very fire, toiling where success can never crown their endeavors. There is no salvation by the works of the law; why, then, look for it? If you dash your head against the law of nature, the law of nature will not change for you; and if you labor in opposition to the irreversible law of God, you will pay the penalty of it in your utter failure. The ancients fabled that it was one of the tortures of hell to which the daughters of Danaus were condemned, that they should fill a tub without a bottom with buckets full of holes. Behold the picture of the self-righteous man's undertaking. He may labor, he may toil; but he is filling a bottomless tub with leaky buckets; and work as he may, though he drop down dead in the attempt, success is impossible. Oh that he knew it to be so, and would trust in the Lord Jesus!

Besides this, the man cannot succeed in obtaining salvation by

his own efforts, because *in what he is doing he is insulting God*, he is casting dirt in the face of Christ; he is denying the whole testimony of the Holy Ghost. Ah, my hearer! if thou couldst save thyself, why was it necessary that Christ should die for thee? If thy prayers could avail, why did he sweat great drops of blood? Why, man, if there were any merit in thy mortification, or thy reformation, what need that the Prince of life and glory should veil himself in ignominy and suffer a death of shame? Thou dost in fact say, by thy fleshly attempts, I want no Saviour; I can save myself. Thou dost in fact scoff at the great atonement which God has made in the person of Christ. This insult will ruin thy soul, except thou turn from it. Repent of it, I pray thee; humble thyself, and receive Jesus' finished work. If, scorning the Jordan, Naaman had gone to Abana and Pharpar, he might have washed not only seven times, but seventy times seven; he might have earnestly persevered in the constant immersion, but he must have remained a leper to his dying day. If you scorn the atonement, and neglect God's great command to *believe and live*, — if you go about to try, and feel, or be, or do, — you will use these Abanas and Pharpars to your own damnation, but to your own salvation never. I pray you, do not insult God by looking for balm in Gilead, or for a physician there; for there is no balm in Gilead; there never was any: there is no physician there, or else the daughter of my people would long ago have been healed; men would long ago have saved themselves. You must look higher than the Gilead of human energy; you must look higher than earth's physicians; you must look to the hills whence cometh our help, the great mountains of a Saviour's work and merit.

There are many other reasons why it is impossible that a man can ever get comfort in the way of works and feelings. The principal I will mention is, because *that is the way of the curse.* He who is under the law is under the curse. So long as I suck to the law, do what I may, I am under the curse of the law, and consequently under the curse; and how can I expect in the way of the curse to find the eternal blessing? Oh, folly! to choose

the way of the curse as the way of blessing. But the best proof of it all is experience. Ask either saint or sinner, and you shall find that peace was never obtained in the way of the flesh. Turn to the Christian, and he will tell you, "Therefore being justified BY FAITH, we have peace with God." He will tell you that when he turns away from faith, and looks to himself, at once his darkness begins. He will assure you that he never walks in perfect light and true comfort except when he keeps his eye fast fixed upon the great sacrifice of Calvary. I know, brethren, whenever I am dull and drooping as to my eternal interests, it is always because I have thought more of my graces than of Christ's grace, or more of the Spirit's work in me than of the finished work of Christ on my behalf. There is no living happily, but by depending wholly upon Christ. A sinner, resting upon his Saviour as his only hope, is blest. Now, if this be the experience of all saints, and if no sinner living will dare to tell you that he can get his conscience quiet by his own works, why do any of you try it? Heaven bears witness that salvation by faith is certain: hell bears witness that works do but ruin us. Oh! hear the double testimony, and lay hold upon eternal life through the person of Christ Jesus. O my dear friend, if you are really panting for salvation, go not round and round these dreary performances of your own doings; it must all end in misery, disappointment, and despair. "They rowed hard to bring it to land, *but they could not.*" All human work which does not begin and end in the Lord Jesus must be a non-success. All your working has been a non-success with you up to the present, and so it will be to the end of the chapter. Give it up, and God help you to try *his* method, for it is sure and efficacious.

III. Now, with very great brevity, I will bring you to the third point of the sermon, which is, that THE SOUL'S SORROW WILL CONTINUE TO INCREASE SO LONG AS IT RELIES UPON ITS OWN EFFORTS.

What is the effect of all that the creature doth before it believes in Christ? It may be overruled for good, but much of

its effect is mischievous. The good effect which flows from it lies in this: *the more a man strives to save himself, the more convinced will he become of his own impotence and powerlessness.* I thought that I could turn to God whenever I pleased till I tried to turn to him; I thought repentance a very easy thing till I began to repent; I dreamed that faith in Christ must be a mere child's play till I had to groan, "Lord, help my unbelief!" As for the law, when we attempt to keep it, we groan under a heavy burden, which we have no strength to bear.

"How long beneath the law I lay
In bondage and distress!
I toiled the precept to obey,
But toiled without success."

Oh! it is hard serving the law. He is a cruel taskmaster; the whip is always going, and the flesh is always bleeding. It is hard service. Weary and faint, we fall down under it, and feel it to be a load intolerable to be borne. Well is Haggi chosen as the type of the law, for indeed it gendereth unto bondage; and well was blazing Sinai chosen as its representative, for even Moses said, when standing upon that mountain, "I do exceedingly fear and quake." To be clean divorced from all legal hope is a blessed preparation for gospel marriage with Christ. It was well that rowing hard made the mariners feel their inability to cope with the tempest; and it is best of all when creature efforts produce a clear discovery of creature weakness.

Another good result will sometimes follow. The man passionately striving to save himself by keeping the law, *finds out the spirituality of that law*, a spirituality which he never saw before. He has given up outward acts of sin, but on a sudden he is startled to find that though he has given them all up in open fact, yet that he is condemned for allowing the thought of them in his heart. Even a look may be fornication, though no act of sin shall follow it. He remembers that even the wish of his heart may be theft; and that covetousness is not only straining after another man's goods, but envying him the enjoyment of

them. Now, he finds the work is impossible indeed; for he might sooner hold the winds in his fist than control his passions, or with his breath blow the sea into a calm, sooner than he could restrain the impetuous propensities of his nature. O, brethren, it is a good thing when we find that the commandment of God is exceeding broad, — when we see the sharpness of this great axe of the law, and how it cuts at the very root of the tree, and leaves us no green thing standing wherein we can boast ourselves. So far so good; fleshly effort, overruled by divine grace, has helped us to the discovery of the grandeur and dignity of the divine law.

But I am afraid that much of this toil and labor is very mischievous, because *it makes unbelief take a firmer grip.* It is easier to comfort a soul who has been a short time in darkness, than it is to comfort one who has given way a long time to an unbelieving state of heart. I remember one, — I believe she is in darkness now, and if I remember right, it is ten years ago since first she fell into these doubts and fears, — and I am sometimes afraid she will never see the light, because it has become chronic with her. Giant Despair's prisoners do not all escape; he has a yard full of bones; these are the relics of willing prisoners who would not be comforted, and put out their own eyes to avoid the light. I believe that some sinners make excuses for themselves out of their despair, and that they let their doubts and fears grow till they cast a thick shadow, like Jonah's gourd, and then they sit down with a miserable sort of comfort beneath the leaves. "There is no hope, therefore will I go on in my sins; there is no hope for me, therefore let the worst come to me; I can but be damned; I will fold my arms, and sit still." Oh, it is a damnable temptation this; it is one which ruins multitudes, I am sure. This is Satan's man-trap: beware of it. This is the devil's stocks in the inner prison: he is to be pitied who is laid by the heels in them. While you are rowing hard to get your vessel to land, and standing out against the gracious plan which God has ordained, you are letting the nightmare of unbelief grow into a dread reality; you are letting this deadly incubus rest

more terribly upon your hearts. O, sinner, I pray God deliver you from this work-mongering, this horrible trying to save yourself by something home-grown home-spun. If we could cut off the head of your self-righteousness, we would have hope of you. If you would give up all attempts to deliver yourselves, and leave the case in Christ's hands, the thing would be done. But while you are thus doubting and fearing, you are sinking deeper in the mire; and it is harder to get you out now than ever it was. Remember this one thing, — that while the sinner is thus straining himself to get to heaven by his own righteousness, *his day of wrath is getting nearer.* He is adding sin to sin; he is accumulating the fuel for his own burning, — filling the sea of wrath in which he must be drowned forever. What! when I am praying, groaning, and crying to God, and when I am trying to mend my ways and do my best, do you say I am only doing mischief? I do say it. I say these things are good in themselves; but if you are resting in them, you are so flying in the teeth of God's great gospel, so insulting the dignity of the great Saviour, that you are adding sin to sin; and among the fagots for your burning there shall be none so dry, which shall burn so terribly, as your own good wicked works, your own rebellious virtues, your own proud, detestable righteousness, which you set up in opposition to the merit, blood, and righteousness of God's appointed Mediator. Gold is good enough; but if you bow down before the golden calf, I will hate the gold because you worship it. Your morality is good enough; but if you trust to it, I will hate your morality because it is your destruction. Sinner, I pray you remember that your life is being shortened all the while you tarry in the plains of self. Time flies, and you fade like a leaf, while your righteousness, which are but filthy rags, are crying out against you. You are laboring without success; but more, you are losing time which might have been turned to better purpose. While you are spending your money for that which is not bread, you are getting nearer and nearer to the dread famine when there shall be no bread to buy. While you are trying to get this fool's oil, with which to keep your lamps

burning, the bridegroom is coming and the midnight is hastening, when you shall have to say, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out." There shall be no time then for you to buy; for the darkness shall have come upon you, and the door shall be shut, and the bridegroom's supper shall have begun. Oh that I could have some power to induce you not to follow any longer these fine ways of yours, these proud, deceptive plans! Oh that you would receive God's plan of redemption, and enjoy the peace which it brings!

IV. We will try to explain God's plan, and then we have done. That is our fourth point: THAT THE WAY OF SAFETY FOR SINNERS IS TO BE FOUND IN THE SACRIFICE OF ANOTHER ON THEIR BEHALF.

Here is Jonah; leave out the fact that he was sinful, and he becomes an eminent type of Christ. "Take me up and cast me into the sea, and the sea shall become calm under me." Substitution saves the mariners; substitution saves sinners. This is the essential oil of gospel truth. Jesus Christ saith to his people, "I am cast into the sea; there in that depth I sleep for a while, like Jonah, to rise again on the third day: but my being cast into the sea makes a deep calm to you." How very simple this process was! They take Jonah, — he himself desires it, — he is thrown overboard, and the deeps swallow him up. Ah, poor Jonah! what a fall! what a terrible descent! what a frightful end to his prophetical career! Down he goes. Did not I see huge jaws opening amid the billows? Was he not devoured by some terrible monster? Poor fellow! he must have our pity. But, how strange it is! Why, the wind has ceased; it has dropped dead; and the waves seem to be playing now where they were battling fiercely a moment ago! Nay, the sea is glassy; we need not the oars any longer; up with the sails; we shall soon be safe in port. An odd thing this, the drowning of one becomes the safety of all. Mariners, let us sacrifice to Jonah's God.

Ah! it is a strange and marvellous thing. It is that which sets angels singing, and makes the redeemed spirits wonder on for-

ever, that Jesus came down into this ship of our common humanity to deliver it from tempest. The vessel had been tossed about on all sides by the waves of divine wrath. Men had been tugging and toiling at the oar; year after year philosopher and teacher had been seeking to establish peace with God; victims had been offered, and rivers of blood had flowed, and even the first-born of man's body had been offered up: but the deep was still tempestuous. But Jesus came, and they took him and cast him overboard. Out of the city they dragged him. "Away with him, away with him; it is not fit that he should live." Out of all comfort they had cast him long ago: now from society they cast him too. From pity they cast him; from all sympathy they cast him; and at last from life itself they hurl him, while God stands there to help them to cast him into a sea of woes. As he, Jesus, dies, there is a calm. Deep was the peace which fell upon the earth that dreadful day; and joyous is that calm which yet shall come as the result of the casting out of that representative man who suffered the just for the unjust to bring us to God.

Brethren, I wish I had meet words with which I could fitly describe the peace which comes to a human heart when we learn to see Jesus cast into the sea of divine wrath on our account. Conscience accuses no longer. Judgment now decides for the sinner instead of against him. Memory can look back upon past sins, with sorrow for the sin it is true, but yet with no dread of any penalty to come. It is a blessed thing for a man to know that he cannot be punished; that heaven and earth may shake, but he cannot be punished for his sin. If God be unjust I may be damned; but if God be just I never can be. That is how the saved sinner stands. Christ has paid the debt of his people to the last jot and tittle, and received the divine receipt; and unless God can be so unjust as to demand twice payment for one debt, no soul for whom Jesus died can ever be cast into hell. Now, it seems to be one of the very principles of our nature to believe that God is just. We feel it, and that gives us our terror at first. But is it not marvellous that this very same first principle — the belief that God is just — becomes afterwards the

pillar of our confidence and peace? If God be just, I, a sinner, alone and without a substitute, must be punished. Christ stands in my stead, and is punished for me; and now, if God be just, I, a sinner, standing in Christ, can never be punished. God must change his nature before one soul for whom Christ was a substitute can ever, by any possibility, suffer the lash of the law.

I must confess I do not understand the atonement which some preach. An atonement which does not atone, — a redemption which does not redeem, — a redemption which intends to redeem all men of Adam born, and yet leaves the major part in slavery, — an atonement which makes full atonement for all human sin, and leaves men to be condemned afterwards, — I cannot understand that. But I do understand a substitution: Christ taking the place of the believer, — Christ suffering the *quid pro quo* for the believer's punishment, — Christ rendering an equivalent to divine wrath for all that his people ought to have suffered as the result of sin. I right well and right joyously understand that the believer, knowing that Christ suffered in his stead, can shout with glorious triumph, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Not God, for he hath justified; not Christ, for he hath died, "yea, rather, hath risen again." My hope is not because I am not a sinner, but because I am a sinner for whom Christ died. My trust is not that I am holy, but that, being unholy, Christ died for me. My rest is, here, not in what I am or shall be, or feel, or know, but in what Christ is and must be, — in what Christ did, and is still doing as he stands before yonder throne of glory.

O beloved! it is a blessed thing to get right out of self. But many believers seem to have one foot on self and one on Christ. They are like the angel with one foot on the sea and the other on the land; only, being angels, they cannot stand on such a footing. Put both feet on the rock, beloved; stand altogether on Christ. Arminianism is one foot on Christ and the other foot on self. "Christ has saved me," says the Arminian; there is his foot on the land. But he says, "I must hold on; it depends upon me whether I persevere to the end;" there is his foot on the

sea. If he does not mind, that foot will give way. But how blessed it is when the Christian can say, "I am saved"! There is no *if*, no *but* about it. There is nothing for me to do to complete my salvation. It is all done. There is not one jot or tittle left to complete the covenant of my salvation; the covenant of effectual grace is all written out in the fair handwriting of my Saviour, with a pen dipped in his own blood, and it guarantees all spiritual blessings to me forever. The edifice has been built, and there is not wanted a beam, or a brick, or even a nail or a tin-tack to complete it; from its foundation to its top-stone it is all of grace, and all perfect. My garment of salvation has been woven from the top throughout; there is not a rag of thread or stitch of mine wanted to complete it. "It is finished," said the Saviour, as he dipped it for the last time in the glorious carmine of his own blood, and made a rich royal robe for his people to wear forever. O brethren! if there were one stone to be put to the walls of our salvation, one single trowel-full of mortar to make the stones set firmly, it would be all undone, all in ruin; but the whole of it has been completed. Stone and mortar, from basement to summit, all has been completed by sovereign grace.

And what shall you and I do? Since Jesus has been cast overboard for us, let us now rest in perfect quiet; let us enjoy the peace "that passeth all understanding, which shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." And then, having been saved in such a way as this, let us now go to our work for God; not to win life, not to win heaven, — life and heaven are ours already, — but, loved by him, let us now love him with a perfect heart. The man who has not attained to rest in Jesus is incapable of virtue. A man who does anything for his own salvation, acts from a selfish motive, does everything for himself, and has no virtue in him; but the man who is saved, who knows there is nothing for him to do either to put himself into salvation or to keep himself in it, knowing that all is now finished, having no need to do anything for self, — he does everything for God, and is holy in heart and life. Now, he can sing with Toplady:

"Loved of my God, for him again
With love intense I'd burn;
Chosen of him ere time began,
I'd choose him in return."

Let us show that this is the true root of virtue. Let us teach men who say this doctrine is licentious, that it is the most heavenly soil in which the fruits of the Spirit can grow. Like a genial sunshine is this doctrine to our fruits to ripen them; like a heavenly shower to bring them forth. God give thee, sinner, to rest *in* my Saviour; God give thee, saint, to live *to* thy Saviour; and he shall have the praise in both cases. Amen

SERMON XIX

GOD IS WITH US.

"IF GOD BE FOR US, WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?" — Romans viii. 31.

THE truth here asserted is indisputable. Even heathens have taken this for their motto, and emblazoned it upon their standards of war. "God is for us!" has been the war-cry of many a warrior as he has dashed to the fight. However out of place it was in such association, its force was clearly perceived. Our text, however, protects itself from ill-usage, for you observe that the text is guarded with the little word "if," as a sentinel. No man, therefore, has any right to the treasures of this text unless he can give the pass-word and answer the question. It is not every man who can say that God is on his side; on the contrary, the most of men are fighting against the Lord. By nature we are the friends of sin, and then God is against us; with all the powers of justice he is against us for our destruction, unless we turn and repent. Is God for us? Remember he is so if we have been reconciled to him by the death of his Son; but an absolute God must be in arms against us, for even our God is a consuming fire. It is only when we behold the Lord Jehovah in the person of Jesus Christ that our hope and joy can begin. When we see Deity incarnate, — when we see God surrendering the glories of his throne to become man, and then stooping to the shameful death of the cross, — it is then that we perceive Immanuel, "God with us;" and, perceiving him, we feel that he is on our side. Question thyself then, soul, whether thou art in Christ. He who is not with Christ is not with God. If thou art without

Christ, thou art without God, and a stranger from the commonwealth of Israel; but if, through the sprinkled blood, thou canst say that thou art reconciled unto God, then take the full meaning of this text, and feast upon it, and be thou blessed; for "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

We shall handle the text thus, — and may the Holy Spirit make it profitable, — *How is God for us?* secondly, *Who are against us?* and, thirdly, *Who are not against us?*

I. First, How is God for us?

Augustine, in his notes upon the verses preceding our text, has very beautifully said that God is for us, according to the preceding words of the chapter, in four senses. Look back a verse or two, and you will find it. He is for us, for he hath predestinated us; he is for us, for he hath called us; he is for us, for he hath justified us; he is for us, because he hath virtually glorified us, and will actually do so. To the people of God here are four very prolific subjects of thought.

1. *God is for us, because*, according to the words of the apostle, *he hath predestinated his people to be conformed to the image of his own dear Son.* Now, if God hath predestinated us to eternal life, who can be against us? Must not the predestinating decree of God take effect? If God hath determined it, who shall disannul it? If God hath said it shall be, who is he that shall stay his hand, or resist the omnipotent fiat of the Most High? He said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" he bade the world spring out of nothing, and forth it came. All things obey him; heaven adores him, hell trembles at him. No creature can resist him. As the potter moulds the clay according to his own will while it revolves upon the wheel, even so the infinite, the omnipotent Jehovah doeth according to his good pleasure in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower world. "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers;" he taketh up the isles as a very little thing: who then, out of these little things, can stand against or resist him? See, my brethren the force of

God's decree of old in the case of Israel. The Lord had promised to Abraham that his seed should inherit the whole land of Canaan, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates. See, amid the smoke of the brick-kilns, Israel toils in Egypt. How was God's decree to be fulfilled? When God makes bare his arm, you shall see and wonder. Pharaoh and all his hosts cannot hold those captives whom God determines to set free. There they go, led forth like sheep by the hands of Moses and Aaron. They cross the desert, until they come to the sea, even to the Red Sea. See, the mighty stream rolls before them, and their ferocious enemies are behind; but the Lord hath determined that they shall inherit the land, and therefore neither can the sea refuse to divide, nor can Pharaoh save himself when he goeth down into the depths thereof. They are in the wilderness: famine shall destroy them. No; the heavens drop with manna. Thirst shall scorch them. No; the rock follows them with its living stream. The serpents shall surely bite them. Nay, but the brazen serpent is lifted up, and whosoever looketh shall be healed. The Amalekites attack them, but while Moses holds up his hands Joshua puts the foe to the route. They come to the banks of the Jordan: what ailed thee, O Jordan, that thou wast driven back? The priests go through dry-shod, and all the people of God march after them. Then the Canaanites, with their chariots of iron, came against them in battle; the kings of mighty cities anointed the shield, and laid hold on sword and buckler; but which of them prevailed? Did not Jehovah destroy them all? As he had given them Og, king of Bashan, because "his mercy endured forever," and Sihon, king of the Amorites, "because his mercy endured forever;" so not a man could stand against them until they possessed the land. The right hand of the Lord fulfilled his own decree. His own right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory. As with a rod of iron he dasheth his enemies in pieces like a potter's vessel. None could withstand the hosts of Israel; the walled cities were cast down, and the people of God dwelt in the fat of the land. See, beloved, the result of God's decree. The sons

of Jacob were feeble and weak, but yet the Lord made them strong enough to drive out the Anakim, who were men of gigantic stature; for his purpose shall stand; he will do all his pleasure. Let us beware of fighting against one who has God in league with him, for it is in vain to fight against God. It was a good remark of the soothsayers to Haman of old; they said, "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him;" and so, if any man be of the company of the elect, — if he be one of those whose names are written in the book of life, — his enemies may contend, but they shall never prevail against him. He *must* stand whom the Lord ordains to hold; and if God determines his salvation, neither mortal nor infernal power shall prevail to destroy him. On this account we may boldly say, with the apostle, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" You cannot believe in a disappointed God; you cannot imagine the imperial decree from the throne of heaven treated as waste paper. It would be far from us so to blaspheme God as to think that any power, known or unknown, can ever overcome him. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he commanded, and shall it not come to pass?" If thy soul be written upon the palms of Jesus' hands, and graven on his heart, no weapon which is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue which riseth against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.

2. But, in looking back, you observe the second thing: God is on our side, for *he has called us.* In the Word of God much stress is laid upon *calling.* When Abraham left the land of his forefathers, and went forth, not knowing whither he went, he was quite safe, though in the midst of implacable enemies, because God had called him. "Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings?" Who but the God that called him? On that memorable occasion, when Abraham returned from the slaughter of the kings, you remember, Melchizedek met him. At that time Abraham was in great peril, for there was every

probability that the defeated kings would gather again their troops, would form alliances with other kings, and would certainly come up to cut down so insignificant a person as that wandering shepherd, Abraham; but what does God say to him? — "Fear not, Abraham; I am thy shield, and thine exceeding great reward." This became his comfort — God had called him. He was a called man; and where God calls, he will not desert his chosen. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He does not reverse the call which he has given; but, having once called his children, he remaineth faithful to the call he has given. To use the illustration we have had before: when God called his son out of Egypt, when he fetched Israel from the furnace, who could stand against the called Israelites? Plague after plague ravaged the land. The cattle died; the crops were blasted; frogs came up into the king's chamber; lice covered all their borders. At last the first-born of Egypt died, and they besought Israel to go forth; for when God called them out, who could hold them in? When he said to his prisoners, "Go forth," what bolts of iron, or what gates of brass could keep them captives? Let the Lord call by the effectual voice — who is he that shall stand against him? Many of us, I trust, have heard the sacred call; we have made our calling and election sure. You know how you were called from darkness to light, from sin to holiness, from self-righteousness to spiritual faith in Jesus. Now, he who hath called you is faithful, and he will not forsake the work of his own hands. He has not called you in order to put you to shame; he has not quickened you, and preserved you, and brought you thus far to deliver you over to the hands of your enemies. "Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart;" wait upon the Lord still, for his call will give thee comfort. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

3. But, again: God proves that he is for us by having *justified us.* All the people of God are wrapped about with the righteousness of Christ, and, wearing that glorious robe, the eye of God sees no fault in them; Jehovah sees no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel. Christ is seen, and not the sinner;

Christ being, therefore, perfection's own self, the believer is seen as perfect in him. God regards his people with the same affection as that wherewith he loves his only-begotten Son. He hath pronounced them clean, and clean they are; he hath proclaimed them just, covered with the righteousness of Christ, and just they are. Come on thou accusing devil; come on ye who lay a thousand things to our charge: but if our Jesus pronounces our acquittal, who is he that condemneth? If he mounts the chariot of salvation, who is he that can be against us? Is it not a mysteriously blessed thing to wear upon one's soul the mark of complete justification? The heathen have a custom of marking themselves upon the forehead with the seal of their god; but, oh! what a seal is this to wear! — what a mark of the Lord Jesus, to go about this world a perfectly justified man! God looketh upon common men with anger, — they are not reconciled unto him, — but towards his people he looketh always with eyes of love. No anger is in his heart to them; not a jot of wrath: all this has been put away through the great sacrifice. Towards them his whole heart goeth out: "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry." Being justified, they have peace with God, through Jesus Christ their Lord. O, dear friends! if God be at peace with you, it matters not who is at war with you; if your Master acquits, it little matters who condemns; if Jehovah absolves, your name may be cast out as evil, — you may be ranked among the vilest of the vile, — your name may be a by-word and a proverb, only fit to be wrought up into the drunkard's song, — but who is he that can be against you? What are all these things, if put into the balance, but lighter than vanity, if Jehovah himself hath justified you?

4. And yet, again, another sweet reflection comes here, — *he hath also glorified us.* Remember the four golden links of the chain, — "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Now, in one sense, God's people are glorified even now; for he "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Mark, it does not

say, "He hath promised that we shall sit there," but he "hath" made us sit there. We do sit there at this hour, for Christ is the representative of every soul for whom he shed his blood; and when Christ took his seat in heaven, every elect soul took his seat in heaven representatively. Remember, beloved, that the glorification of God's people is a certain fact; it is not a thing which may be, but it is a thing which must be. What does Jesus Christ say to his people when he gathers them at the right hand? "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Do observe that. Do you think God has prepared a kingdom, and that he will not bring his people there? Moreover, it is said, "prepared for *you*," — for *you*, the chosen people of God; and do you imagine that the covenant wisdom of God would prepare a kingdom for men who would not ultimately get there? Would he plan and arrange how to make them eternally blessed, and yet suffer them to perish by the way? "Prepared yor *you*," remember, "from the foundation of the world." There is a crown in heaven which no head can fit but mine; there is a harp there which no fingers must ever touch but mine. Child of God! there is a mansion in heaven which will never be rightly tenanted if you do not get there; and there is a place at God's right hand which must be empty: it will be said, "David's seat was empty," unless you shall arrive there. Will it be so? Will there be empty mansions in heaven? Will there be crowns without heads to wear them? Will there be harps without hands to strike them? No; the muster-roll of the redeemed shall be read, and not one shall be found absent: as many as were written upon the breast-plate of the great High Priest shall be securely found there.

"Not death nor hell shall e'er divide
His chosen from his breast;
In the dear bosom of his love
They must forever rest."

This gives a fourth reason why God is for us. But, O my brethren! though this brings in the context, I cannot — it is

impossible for any human speech to bring out the depth of the meaning of how God is for us. He was for us before the worlds were made; he was for us, or else he never would have given his Son; he was for us even when he smote the only-begotten, and laid the full weight of his wrath upon him, — he was for *us*, though he was against *him;* he was for us when we were ruined in the fall, — he loved us notwithstanding all; he was for us when we were against him, and with a high hand were bidding him defiance; he was for us, or else he never would have brought us humbly to seek his face. He has been for us in many struggles. We have had to fight through multitudes of difficulties; we have had temptations from without and within: how could we have held on until now if he had not been with us? He is for us, let me say, with all the infinity of his heart, with all the omnipotence of his love, — for us with all his boundless wisdom; arrayed in all the attributes which make him God, he is for us — eternally and immutably for us; for us when yon blue skies shall be rolled up like a worn-out vesture; for us throughout eternity. Here, child of God, is matter enough for thought, even though thou hadst ages to meditate upon it: God is for thee; and if God be for thee, who can be against thee?

II. In the second place, WHO ARE AGAINST US?

The apostle never meant to say that Christians have no enemies, for he knew a great deal better. An old Latin writer observes upon this text, that the succeeding context will show us the enemies we have who are against us. Very briefly let us notice that there are four main enemies who conspire against the life of the children of God; there are *man*, the *world*, the *flesh*, and the *devil*. These always will be against us, but who are they?

1. First, there is *man*. How man has struggled against man! Man is the wolf of mankind. Not the elements in all their fury, nor the wild beasts of prey in all their cruelty, have ever been such terrible enemies to man as man has been to his own fellow. When you read the story of the Marian persecution in England,

you are astounded that ever creatures wearing a human form could be so bloodthirsty. Call these *Catholics* who thus persecuted the Protestants? Call them Catholics? Much better call them cannibals, for they behaved more like savages than Christians in their bloody martyrdoms and murders of the saints of God. We do not in this age feel the cruelty of man to that extent, but this is only because the custom of the land will not allow it; for there are many who dare not smite with the hand, who are very busy in laying on their tongue, and this not by exposing our errors, which they have a perfect right to do, but in many cases the children of God are misrepresented, slandered, abused, persecuted, ridiculed for truth's sake; and we know many instances where other means are resorted to, — anything to drive the servants of God away from their integrity, and from their simple following of their Master. Well did the Lord Jesus say, "Beware of men." "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves." Do not expect men to be the friends of your piety; or, if they are, suspect the reality of that piety of which ungodly man is a friend. Thou must expect to be sometimes bullied and sometimes coerced, to be sometimes flattered, and, anon, threatened; thou must expect at one time to meet with the oily tongue which hath under it the drawn sword, and at another time with the drawn sword itself. Look out, and expect that men will be against you. But what are they all? Suppose every living man in the world were against you, and that you had to stand in solitude like Athanasius, you might say, as Athanasius did: "I, Athanasius, against the whole world; I know I have truth on my side, and therefore against the world I stand." Of what use was the malice of men against Martin Luther? They thought to burn him, but he died in his bed despite them all. They thought to put an end to him, but his little tracts went everywhere, and the words of Luther seemed to be carried on the wings of angels, until in the most distant places the Pope found an enemy suddenly springing up, where he thought the good seed had all been destroyed. I do not know that it is of any very great service to have

numbers with you. I question whether truth has not generally to be with the minority, and whether it is not quite as honorable to serve God with two or three as it would be with two or three millions; for if numbers could make a thing right, idolatry ought to be the right religion; and if in countries across the sea numbers made the thing right, why, those who fear the Lord would be few indeed, and idolatry and Romanism would be the right thing. Never judge according to numbers; say they are nothing but men after all. If they be good men, fight on their side; but if they and the truth fall out, fall out with them. Be a friend to the truth; make your appeal to the law, and to the testimony, and if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them; and if there be no light in them, do not trust your soul with them: for if the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch. Who then, what then, are men? Only puppets moved by God's hand. He has the spring to pull them all which way he wills, and if they will not serve him he can soon let them quietly into the grave. Therefore be not afraid of the son of man, who is but a worm, a little heap of dust; be not thou dismayed at him; and if he put on a black and terrific face, look him in the face with thine own truthfulness, and put him to the blush. That was grand of Latimer, when he preached before Henry VIII. He had greatly displeased his majesty by his boldness in a sermon preached before the king, and was ordered to preach again on the following Sabbath, and to make an apology for the offence he had given. After reading his text, the bishop thus began his sermon: "Hugh Latimer, dost thou know before whom thou art this day to speak? To the high and mighty monarch, the king's most excellent majesty, who can take away thy life if thou offendest; therefore, take heed that thou speakest not a word that may displease. But then consider well, Hugh, dost thou not know from whence thou comest — upon whose message thou art sent? Even by the great and mighty God, who is all-present, and who beholdeth all thy ways, and who is able to cast thy soul into hell! Therefore, take care that thou deliverest thy message faithfully." He then

proceeded with the same sermon he had preached the preceding Sabbath, but with considerably more energy. Such courage should all God's children show when they have to do with man. Thou art thyself nothing but a worm; but if God puts his truth into thee, do not play the coward, or stammer out his message, but stand up manfully for God and for his truth. Some people are forever crying up what they call a becoming modesty. Modesty is very becoming; but an ambassador of God must recollect there are other virtues besides modesty. If Her Majesty sent an ambassador to a country with whom we were at war, and the little man should step into the conference, and say, "I humbly hope you will excuse my being here; I wish to be in all things complacent to your honors and lordships the plenipotentiaries; I feel I am a young man, and you are much older than I am, and therefore I cheerfully submit my judgment to your superior wisdom and experience," and so on, — why, I am sure Her Majesty would command him back again, and then command him into a long retirement. What business has he to humble himself, when he is an ambassador for the queen? He must remember he is clothed with the dignity of the power which sent him. And even so is God's minister, and he counts it foul shame to stoop to any man; he takes for his motto, *Cedo nulli*, "I yield to none;" and, preaching God's truth in love and honesty, he hopes to be able to render a fair account to his Master at last, for unto his Master only doth he stand or fall.

2. The second adversary is *the world.* This world is like a great field covered with brambles and thorns and thistles, and as the Christian goes through it he is continually in danger of rending his garments or cutting his feet. Yet —

> "The dear path to thine abode,
> Lies through this barren land."

Every citizen of heaven must be taught with thorns and briers, as were the men of Succoth. Every child of God must march through the enemies' land; for Christ says, "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep

them from the evil." When is a Christian out of danger? Never. If he be prosperous, then he is apt to grow purse-proud or carnally secure; if adversities press upon him, then he is apt to murmur and to grow unbelieving. There are temptations in the high places of the earth, and the valleys are not without them. When the Christian is in honor he is in great peril. Ah! how many have found the high places to be slippery ones! When the believer is in shame and disrepute, he is in danger too, for many professors have found this cross too heavy for their shoulders. A believer ought to walk through this world expecting to meet with an enemy behind every hedge, reckoning it a wonder if he shall escape for a single day without a bullet from the foe. You are in an enemy's country, and this enemy is on the alert continually. You may sleep, but the world never sleeps; its customs are always seeking to bind you with their chains; its spirit is creeping over you while you are on the exchange, or in the market, or even in the family: you will find the very atmosphere of this world tends to make you sleep as do others. You will have much ado while you are in this state of temptation to stand your ground, and unless you watch and pray, the world will be too much for you. O, brethren! I would that we knew the world to be more our enemy than we do, for many walk as if they were friends with this world. But such is not the Christian's position; he can say, "The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Luther used to say there was no love lost between him and the world; for the world hated him, and he hated it no less. There is a memorable story told of a good old minister, when some young minister went weeping to him because he had been slandered. "Ah," said he, "that is a trouble I shall never have again, for I lost my character the first year of my ministry, and slander itself can say no more than she has said." God's servants must expect to lose their characters — to have every virtue denied them, and every vice imputed to them; but under all this they can face the world, and say to it, "Thou thinkest badly of me, dost thou? not so badly as I think of thee. Thou throwest this and that in my teeth; I throw worse things

in thine; and whereas thou sayest I am a noisy busy-body and a meddler, I will tell thee I purpose to be viler still, and to be noisier still against thee, and to meddle yet more with thy vanities which ruin the souls of men." The world is a terrible assailant if we are left alone in the conflict; but what is the world, after all, if God be for us? As for this present age, where will it be in forty years? I see a long line of turf mounds, and many a "Here he lies," and this generation is all gone: it passeth away in the fashion thereof; it is like a candle-snuff, and he that cares for it is like a man worshipping a dying taper. Care little for this world, but think much of the world to come. This poor quicksand — get off of it, lest it swallow thee up; but yonder rock of ages — build thou on it, and thou shalt never suffer loss

3. I think we said there is a third enemy, and that is *the flesh* It is the worst of the three. We should never need to fear man nor the world if we had not this wicked flesh to carry about with us. Inbred corruption is the worst of corruption. "Lord," said Augustine, "deliver me from my worst enemy, that wicked man myself." If a Christian could lay himself down, and run away from himself, and never see himself again, he would be delighted beyond measure; for "truly in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing," is the experience not of the apostle only, but of every child of God. When you would do good, evil is present with you; you want to fly, but, like the hawk which hath a chain to her leg, you can but stretch your wings and flutter, for you cannot mount aloft. You long to feel your heart as hot as an oven, but there is a mountain of ice within you which chills your flaming desires. To will is present with you — oh! if you could be what you would be! — but how to perform that which is good you find not, by reason of the infirmity and weakness of your nature, and the depravity you have inherited from your parents. Some of you have an irritable temper; it will be your plague until you die. Others find that though you desire to be liberal to the cause of God, yet a covetous disposition has to be struggled with. Some have to fight against levity, others against pride; and, on the other hand, there are some of us whose daily

burden is to fight against despondency and lowness of spirits, so that we have all some besetting sin; but if God be for us, what matters the flesh? Ah, poor flesh! thou mayst kick and struggle as thou wilt, but when God holds his silver sceptre over thee, thou shalt surely yield. When Jehovah decrees that a man shall be sanctified, that man's flesh may cry and groan, but the furnace shall refine him, the Holy Spirit shall purify him, and experience shall teach him, and the blood of Christ shall perfect him. Despite that wicked heart of ours, we shall on eagles wings ascend, and be found without fault before the throne of God.

4. The last enemy is *the devil.* I do not know whether he is worse than the flesh or not, but I think I may put him down as being about on a par with it; for when the devil meets our flesh, the two shake hands, and say, "How dost thou do, brother?" Truly the two are brethren — for our flesh was originally in the family of wrath. Ah! that arch-traitor Satan! little do we know what temptations he is plotting and planning for us even now. He is so crafty, that he understands human nature better than human nature understands itself. He has been playing the trade of a tempter for six thousand years, — he ought to be a thorough master of the business; and certainly he is. He who made us knows more of us than Satan does; but, next to God, Satan is the best student of humanity. He knows our weak points, too; he understands where to touch us, so as to touch our bone and our flesh; he knows how to cover up the hook with the bait; for every soul he has his lure, and for every sinner he has his trap. He knoweth how to take one this way, and the other the opposite, — some by straining after pretended spirituality, and others by descending into the grossest sensuality. Depend on it, my brother, thou mayst think thyself to be safe against Satan, but there is a joint in thy harness, and he will find it out; and remember, as one leak may sink a ship, so one weak point may be, and would be, thy ruin, if God did not prevent it. But what matters the devil when we have this text: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" The devil is mighty, but God is

almighty; Satan is strong, but all strength belongeth unto God. What is Satan, after all, but an enemy who has had his head broken? He is a broken-headed dragon. The Lord has a hook in his nose, and a bridle in his jaws, and he knows how to pull him back. Sometimes I wish he would take him up a link or two, that he might not be so busy amongst some of our churches: but he is a chained enemy: the Lord lets him go just so far, but never any further. Oh! if the fiend could get just a little further, what havoc he would work! You know how it was with Job: Satan dared not touch his flesh at first — he could only touch his children and cattle; he had to get permission to touch his flesh, and even then he dared not touch his life. He went as far as his tether, and vexed poor Job with sore blains; he could not go any further, for God restrained him. Rejoice, Christian, whether it be man, or the whole world, or thy flesh, or Satan, if God hath predestinated thee, called thee, justified thee, and in the person of Jesus Christ glorified thee, thou mayst put the whole together, and then say, "Who can be against us?" "As chaff is driven away, so, O Lord, thou hast driven them away."

III. We shall close our meditation this morning — God make it profitable to his own people! — by observing WHO ARE THOSE WHO ARE NOT AGAINST US; for there are some who cannot be our enemies. Here is a very pleasing part of the subject.

God the Father cannot be against us. He is our Father; he cannot be against his own children. He hath chosen us; he will not cast us away. He hath adopted us into his family; he will never discard us. He hath been pleased to ordain us unto eternal life; he will never reverse the decree. He was for us in the covenant of grace, when he planned the way to save rebellious man. He hath been for us in the great ordering of providence; all things have worked together for good for us until now. We wonder how we have arrived where we now are: but surely providence, under God, has wrought wondrously on our behalf. He is for us in all the decrees which are yet to be fulfilled.

There is not a single line in the great Book which is against the Christian. You may rest assured that whether earth shall rock and reel, or the moon be black as sackcloth of hair, or the earth be licked up with tongues of fire, still Jehovah has not a single thought, nor wish, nor word, nor look, against any one of the blood-bought ones; they are all safe in him God the Father cannot be against us.

Then *God the Son* is not against us. O, beloved! how sweetly he has been for us! Methinks I see him now, lifting up that face all covered with bloody sweat, and saying to every believer, "I am for thee; these gouts of gore fall to the dust for you; I sweat great drops of blood that I might redeem you." He stands before Pilate; and when he is brought forth with the "*Ecce homo*," I think I hear him say, "Poor sinner, I am for you." I see him carrying the cross upon his bleeding shoulders, and every step he takes is to this tune, "I am for you." I behold him bleeding upon the tree, with outstretched hands, and all his wounds, and all the drops of blood which flow from his side, all say, "Christ is for you." To-day, as he pleads before the eternal throne, this is the tenor of his plea, "I am for you." When he shall come a second time, without a sin-offering, unto salvation, the sound of the mighty trumpet which shall herald his advent will ring out, "Christ is for you, O ye blood-bought saints." When he shall sit upon the throne of his Father, and his kingdom shall come, whereof there shall be no end, this shall be the tenor of that kingdom, "I am for my people; I will rule my people righteously, and bless the nations upon earth." Christ cannot be against you. You cannot look into that dear face of his and think that he will ever leave you. Your husband is married to you, and he has proved his love by such indisputable tokens, that you must not — oh! you cannot doubt it. Child of God, I almost defy you to doubt the love of your Lord Jesus Christ. How can he put you away? Could he have bought you at such a price — could he have suffered so much for you, and yet leave you, throw you away upon the dunghill? Impossible! impossible! Those wounds forever seal your everlasting security.

Then the *Holy Spirit* cannot be against us. He must always, as the comforter, comfort his own people; as the illuminator, he must lead us into the truth; as the great giver of life, he must always quicken us from our death of sin. Whatever power the Holy Spirit has, it is all engaged for us, "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Then *the holy angels* — these cannot be against us. When Elisha opened his servant's eyes, the servant had cried before, "Alas! master, what shall we do?" when he saw the Syrians and their chariots; but now he sees horses of fire and chariots of fire round about Elisha. It is so with you. The angels are ministering spirits, who minister unto the heirs of salvation; they bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone. Millions of spiritual creatures walk this earth, both when we wake and when we sleep; and when the black angels come to attack us, the good angels contend against them, and many a heavenly duel is fought where none but spirit eyes can see; many a sacred fight goes on for the defence of the saints, even as Michael fought with the dragon for the body of Moses. The good angels are all for us, and here we may rejoice.

Then we know *the law of God* cannot be against us. It was our enemy once through our sins, but it is now satisfied. Christ has made it honorable; it has not a word to say against any soul that is justified in Christ.

The justice of God has not a word to say against the Christian; on the contrary, justice is well content to confirm the saving decree; for, says Justice, "That sinner owes me nothing — Christ has discharged his debts; I will not put that sinner in prison — I have no right to do so, for Christ was imprisoned instead of him; I will not lay my whip upon his shoulders, for Christ suffered, with his much-ploughed shoulders, in the stead of that poor believing soul." So, Christian, whoever may be against you, here is a comfort — God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, never can be against you: the angels of heaven, the law and justice of God, must always be for you; and if it be so, who can be against you?

Two remarks, and then I have done. One is, *there is an opposite to all this*, and it belongs to some who are present here this morning. If God be against you, who can be for you? If you are an enemy to God this morning, your very blessings are curses to you; your pleasures are only the prelude to your pains. Remember, sinner, that whether you have adversity or prosperity, so long as God is against you, you can never truly prosper. If you spread yourself like a green bay tree, it is only that you may be ready for the axe; you may be fattened with wealth, but you are only prepared as the bullock for the slaughter. Take these words home, I pray you, and let them ring in your ears: "*If God be against me*," — just that supposition — a supposition which is fact, because you have not believed in Christ, you have not given your heart to God. "If God be against me!" Will you just think this over on your road home; take half an hour this afternoon to think it over. "*If God be against me, what then?* — what will become of me in time and eternity? If God be against me, how shall I die — how shall I rise again? How shall I face him in the day of judgment, if God be against me?" It is not an impossible "if," but an "if" which amounts to a certainty, I fear, in the case of many who are sitting in this house to-day.

Then, Christian, here is another thought, and I have done. If God be for you, *do you not see how you ought to be for God?* If God has espoused *your* cause, ought you not to espouse *his?* I pleaded with you last Sabbath-day, since Christ hath pleaded the causes of your soul, to plead the cause of Christ. There is a great battle which has only just begun. The trumpet which musters the warriors soundeth loud and long, and the fight will be stern and desperate between Christ's pure truth and the ceremonials of the world's church; and ye must take your post, every one of you, on one side or the other. "If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." One side or the other ye must be on; and I ask you, if God has been for you and defended you, stand up for him. Never bate a jot of Christ's truth. Not a hair of the head of Christ's truth must ever be

suffered to be touched with the smell of the fire of compromise. Be not as the harlots were who stood before Solomon. You remember one was quite content to have half the living child; but be your motto, "All or none: I will never take a particle of error. Death to it all!" No amalgamation, no compromise, no peace with error. The men of this generation cry to me, and say, "Is there peace?" and my answer is, "What peace can there be so long as the sins of Jezebel are so many?" Then they revile me, and say, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim." Stand up and bear witness against regeneration by baptism, and against those who use popish words, and would have us believe that it is right to attach another sense to them. Take your part with Christ and his despised people, and when the day comes when he shall distribute his rewards, happy shall that man be who never flinched; and blessed shall he be, and shall she be, who stood fast in the evil day, and stood still in the integrity of the Lord, and in the firmness of his truth, firm even to the end.

The Lord bless you in this thing for Christ's sake. Amen.

THE END.

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